

T W E N T Y

S E R M O N S

James Preached before and after the *Young*

C E L E B R A T I O N

watch

OF THE

1775

Makers

L O R D ' s S U P P E R .

By sundry MINISTERS of the Church of Scotland, viz.

The R E V E R E N D

Mr William Wishart senior, late
Principal in the University of
Edinburgh, with a preface by
the Author.

Mr Walter Douglass late Mini-
ster at Linton.

Mr Thomas Halyburton late

Professor of Divinity in the
University of St Andrew's;
with a Preface by the late Mr
Thomas Black Minister at
Perth.

Mr John Willison Minister late
at Dundee.

F I V E S E R M O N S by each.

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P R E F A C E.

TH E sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, being a solemn commemoration of the wonderful work of the redemption of sinners, by the death and sufferings of the Son of GOD, is one of the most considerable and important pieces of the Christian service; the right performance of which must contribute very much to the believer's establishment and increase in holiness and comfort.

Communion-days are among the most glorious days of the Son of man that his people enjoy upon earth; which therefore it concerns them carefully to improve; especially considering how uncertain the continuance of gospel-days is, and how great and lamentable a judgment it must be to be deprived of them.

As we are obliged to partake of this ordinance by the dying command of our *blessed Lord and Saviour*, and therefore cannot neglect it without great sin; so *the sin and danger of communicating unworthily* are declared to be of the highest nature, that hereby we may be excited to set about this duty with *suitable preparation*.

Our business at a communion-table is to commemorate the dying love of a glorious Redeemer; to behold him as the Lamb of GOD taking away the sin of the world: and both his honour and our own interest require that this be done with suitable dispositions and affections.

In the institution of this sacrament our thoughts are directed to the *second coming of Christ*, as that of which the ordinance is a sure pledge or token: so that we are to celebrate that memorial of his *first appearance to bear the sins of many*, in the prospect of his appearing the *second time*, to them who look for him, *without sin, unto salvation*; and we ought to improve that ordinance to confirm our faith of his second coming, and as a mean of our *preparation* for it, which is the great end of all gospel ordinances, and particularly of the Lord's Supper.

As it appears from what is said, that in this ordinance we are to call to mind the most glorious things GOD either hath done or will do for his people: so in the right use of it, we partake of the greatest benefits we can enjoy here on earth, and are confirmed in the faith and hope of these we look for hereafter in heaven.

For these reasons, as it is of the greatest importance to Christians that they go about this ordinance in a right manner, and make a due improvement of it: so, it is especially incumbent on ministers of the gospel to afford them proper assistances for these purposes

The following *sermons* are a few of the many I have preached with this view, on occasion of the celebration of this sacrament. Tho' I have been often pressed to publish some of them; I have always declined it, because so many excellent discourses are already published for the assistance of Christians in this piece of their work: but the *publisher* having informed me of his design of printing *a collection of sacramental sermons* by several ministers of this church, and that he had already obtained a grant of some sermons from other ministers for that purpose; I was prevailed with to give in these *five sermons*, which I hope may, by the blessing of GOD, be useful to those who seriously peruse them: and their suitableness to the purpose of the sacrament may, I think, in some measure appear from the hints I have already given; and will, I hope, be further evident to the attentive reader. I recommend them, and the reader in the use of them, to the grace of GOD.

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T H E P R E F A C E

TO MR HALYBURTON'S FIVE S E R M O N S.

TH E following sermons need no recommendation. The known worth of the author, the subjects treated of, the spiritual dexterity discovered in handling them, will, I hope, sufficiently recommend them unto all such as shall, with an humble and serious mind, peruse them.

The author's portraiture is so fairly drawn, partly by himself, in these of his writings already published, partly by his friends, who have given the world an account of his character; that it wants not my pencil to illuminate any part of it. Yet I do, with a particular pleasure, own, That being of his acquaintance about the space of 14 years, and having frequently had occasion of converse with him, I wanted not opportunity to observe that in him, which exceedingly endeared him unto me, and made me reckon it a great happiness to have had such intimacy with him. Besides his solid learning, his clear and penetrating judgment, his acute reasoning, his eminent piety, and other excellent endowments, there was one thing, I could not but highly value in his converse, that according to the apostle's advice Eph. iv. 29. What proceeded out of his mouth was good, to the use of edifying, which might minister grace to the hearers.

The P R E F A C E.

So that I may truly say, I was seldom in his company, but it was mine own fault if I was not edified.

And here also I crave leave to remark, that notwithstanding the pregnancy of his parts, and his knowledge in the mystery of redemption through Christ, above many; yet no man was less fond of novelty in divinity, nor more careful to hold fast the form of sound words. He was indeed an enemy to legal preaching, and was under no small fears of the prevailing of a legal spirit, both in ministers and people. But at the same time, he was very far from running to the other extreme. He knew well, that it had been the special mercy of this church, to keep the golden mean betwixt the Pelagian scheme on the one hand, and the Antinomian on the other; that as, the glorious grace of God in Christ, in a great measure denied by the former, in all its several shapes; so the latter, under a pretence (nay perhaps, in some, from a real design) of exalting the riches and freedom of grace, does exceedingly disparage it. And in this he trode the steps of these burning and shining lights of this church, who, in the last age, made it their great business, both in preaching and writing, to caution people against both these extremes.

The subjects insisted on in this book, as they are of the greatest importance to the

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fouls of men, so they are exceeding sweet and precious, and very suitable to the special occasions, upon which these discourses were prepared and delivered. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is our great gospel-feast, at which the people of God are entertained with fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined. In this blessed ordinance, Christ the wisdom and power of God is evidently set forth, crucified before our eyes. Here it is, that the Lord is graciously pleased, sometimes to give special manifestations of himself to the souls of his people, which they are called to improve for their confirmation and establishment. In attending upon this solemnity in a due manner, the Lord vouchsafes to his own the sweet influences of his Spirit and grace, whereby their souls are refreshed and revived after sad decays: and serious souls ordinarily have never more ardent desires after, and fervent longings for the breaking of that glorious day, when all shadows shall for ever flee away, than when they come from this precious ordinance, which is one of the nearest resemblances of heaven, that we enjoy here upon earth.

As to the author's managing of these subjects, the discourses will speak for themselves. I shall only say, that, modestly speaking, something, well worth the reader's perusal, may be expected upon such argu-

The P R E F A C E.

So that I may truly say, I was seldom in his company, but it was mine own fault if I was not edified.

And here also I crave leave to remark, that notwithstanding the pregnancy of his parts, and his knowledge in the mystery of redemption through Christ, above many; yet no man was less fond of novelty in divinity, nor more careful to hold fast the form of sound words. He was indeed an enemy to legal preaching, and was under no small fears of the prevailing of a legal spirit, both in ministers and people. But at the same time, he was very far from running to the other extreme. He knew well, that it had been the special mercy of this church, to keep the golden mean betwixt the Pelagian scheme on the one hand, and the Antinomian on the other; that as, the glorious grace of God in Christ, in a great measure denied by the former, in all its several shapes; so the latter, under a pretence (nay perhaps, in some, from a real design) of exalting the riches and freedom of grace, does exceedingly disparage it. And in this he trode the steps of these burning and shining lights of this church, who, in the last age, made it their great business, both in preaching and writing, to caution people against both these extremes.

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The P R E F A C E.

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The P R E F A C E.

ments from one who had really tasted that the LORD is gracious; who felt the power of these truths on his own spirit, which he delivered unto others; who knew well how to comfort others with that comfort where-with he himself had been comforted of God; and who, in a word, was a work-man that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth: and I persuade myself, that such as read them in a suitable manner, shall not find their expectations frustrated.

Had the now glorified author designed them for the press, or reviewed them, with an eye to the publishing of them, they would no doubt have come forth in a better dress, being only written in order to his preaching them to a popular audience, and not so full perhaps as delivered, partly through want of time, partly through bodily indisposition, but even under these, and other disadvantages of an alike nature, such as have revised them, are not afraid to venture them abroad as they are, being confident that not only the matter, but even the method and stile will be found acceptable, and, in a special manner, adapted to the relish of persons exercised unto Godliness.

I conclude, with wishing that the Lord himself, who only can give the increase, may be graciously pleased to accompany these five sermons with his effectual blessing, and make them eminently successful in promoting the great ends of his glory, and the good of souls.

F I V E
S E R M O N S

Preached before and after the
C E L E B R A T I O N
O F T H E
L O R D ' S S U P P E R.

By Mr W I L L I A M W I S H A R T,
Principal of the C O L L E G E of Edinburgh, and one of the
Ministers of the C I T Y.

S E R M O N I.

Before the L O R D ' S S U P P E R.
Of G O S P E L - D A Y S being sometimes under Restraint.

LUKE xvii. 22.

*And He said unto the Disciples, The days will come, when ye shall
desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall
not see it.*

I T was an opinion generally received amongst the Jews, That
the kingdom of the Messiah would be a glorious temporal
kingdom : And there being great expectations of it about the
time when our blessed Saviour came in the flesh, the Pharisees
were impatient to hear some tidings about it, and therefore ask
our Lord, when that glorious scene would open, *when the king-
dom of G O D should come.* To this he gives an answer in
the two verses immediately preceeding my text, where he doth
not gratify their curiosity with respect to the time, but sets him-
self to rectify their mistake about the nature of the Messiah's
kingdom, *The kingdom of G O D,* says he, *cometh not with obser-
vation, q. d.* you have taken up a false notion of the kingdom
of the Messiah ; it is not like the kingdoms of the world ; it
comes not with outward shew, pomp and splendor, so as to be
A taken

taken notice of by the men of the world : *They shall not say, lo here, or lo there ; for behold the kingdom of G O D is within you ;* in the souls and consciences of men, changing their hearts and lives : or, as others render the words, it is *in the midst of you ; i. e.* it is already set up among you, by the dispensation of the gospel, and the blessed success of it, though ye are not aware of it.

Then in my text he turns himself from the Pharisees to his own disciples, and forewarns them of the sad interruption that his work in their hands should meet with, they expected a constant series of glorious gospel days in advancing his kingdom ; but he warns them of a sad disappointment they would meet with. Here observe,

1. *To whom he gives this warning, to his own disciples ; And he said unto the disciples.* He leaves the Pharisees and applies himself especially to them, because they were the men that had a great work committed to them for advancing his kingdom, and their hearts were very much set upon the success of it, though they had some mistaken apprehensions about it.

2. *The warning itself ;* and it concerns a sad disappointment they would meet with in their expectations and desires, with respect to glorious gospel days. By *days of the Son of man*, we are to understand *gospel days*, days of the dispensation of the gospel with liberty and success, called *days of the Son of man*, because on such days Christ's honour is promoted, and his kingdom advanced. In the context he is speaking of the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be advanced by the dispensation of the gospel : yet he doth not call *gospel days*, *days of the Messiah*, but, *days of the Son of man* ; intimating thereby, that he himself now come in the flesh was the true Messiah, whose kingdom G O D had now set up in the midst of them.

Now, with respect to such gospel-days, he gives this warning in my text. It is here implied, that the time would come when there should be a sad restraint of such gospel days ; that they should enjoy them for a while, but they would not last ; the gospel would not be always preached with alike liberty and success. Now under this restraint he intimates,

(1.) *What their desires and wishes would be ; ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man : i. e.* Ye shall earnestly desire

fire and long for such glorious gospel days as once ye enjoyed, from the earnest desire you shall have to the flourishing of my kingdom.

(2.) *The sad disappointment they should meet with : and ye shall not see it ; ye shall wish for such days in vain. GOD will not see it meet to gratify your desires. Yea, tho' one day of the Son of man would stanch your longing, yet you shall not have it.*

(3.) *The time or season. The days will come.* He does not think fit to be more particular, yet it is plainly enough intimated in what he says to them, that these days could not be far off: for *the days will come*, says he, *when ye (my disciples) shall desire to see such a day, and shall not see it, q. d* these days will come in your own time, before you have done with your work, in the days of your ministry; therefore deceive not yourselves with the expectation of glorious gospel days being continued without interruption, for it shall not be so.

The doctrine I shall handle from these words is this,

Gospel days, days of the Son of man, may sometimes come under such restraints in the church, that not one of them can be enjoyed, tho' much desired and longed for by gracious souls.

I shall explain and confirm this doctrine in the following propositions.

Prop. I. *There are such days as gospel days, days of the Son of man ; as,*

1. *When the gospel and gospel ordinances are enjoyed with outward liberty, Acts xxviii. 30, 31. When there are renewed and frequent opportunities of preaching and hearing the gospel, administering and partaking of gospel ordinances, without fear ; so that people have access to the solemn assemblies without any restraint ; multitudes flocking to the ordinances as doves to the windows, and inviting one another with joy and pleasure to go up into the house of the Lord : Plal cxxii. 1. so that sermon-days, and communion-days, without outward liberty, are gospel days, days of the Son of man.*

2. *When the dispensation of the gospel is accompanied with Christ's power and presence ; so that there is great and remarkable success. When a great and effectual door is opened by the Lord ; so that conversion-work goes on apace, and many are brought into Christ ;*

and such as are brought in, are edified and built up by the gospel, and confirmed, quickened, strengthened and refreshed in the ways of the Lord. Such days of the Son of man did the primitive church enjoy immediately after Christ's ascension, when thousands were added to the church in one day, Acts ii. 41. and iv. 4. And when the disciples preached the gospel at Antioch, it is said, *The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord*, Acts xi. 21. And elsewhere we have this account, *Then had the churches rest—and were edified; and walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied*, Acts ix. 31. When the power of divine grace accompanies the gospel, so that it hath admirable success in the conversion and edification of souls, and blessed fruits in the hearts and lives of people; these are glorious gospel days, *days of the power of GOD*, as the Psalmist calls them, when he says, *thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Psal. cx. 3.

Such *gospel days* are called *days of the Son of man*, 1. Because gospel ordinances dispensed on such days are Christ's ordinances; they have his stamp impressed upon them. 2. Such days are days of communion with Christ; days on which people find and meet with him; days on which his people hear from him, and converse with him, and enjoy near and intimate communion with him in his ordinances. 3. They are days in which Christ is greatly honoured and glorified, the power, riches and freedom of his grace manifested, and his kingdom advanced among men. On such days he mounts his *white horse*, and in his *Majesty rides prosperously*, Rev. vi. 2. and make his *arrows sharp in the hearts of sinners*, whereby they fall under him and submit to him: Psal. xlv. 3, 4, 5. They are days on which he conquers the hearts of rebellious sinners, and subdues them to himself, so that they are his *victrious and triumphant days*. Hence it is that in glorious gospel days, he is represented as having on his *head many crowns*, Rev. xix. 12.

Prop. II Sometimes such *gospel days, days of the Son of man*, may be under a *sad restraint*.

This *restraint* may be considered in a *two-fold respect*.

1. *With respect to outward liberty and freedom*, Opportunities of preaching and hearing the gospel, of administering and partaking in

ing of gospel ordinances may be cut off from a people; so far at least, that they have not such free access to them as sometimes they have had. So, in the days of Eli the high Priest, it is said, *And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision,* 1 Sam. iii. 1. And the Lord threatens his ancient people with a famine of hearing the word of the Lord; so that they should run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and should not find it, Amos viii. 11, 12. And says the Lord by the Prophet, *Therefore night shall be unto you, that you shall not have a vision: and it shall be dark unto you that you shall not divine: and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them,* Mic. iii. 6. To this purpose also the prophet laments, *The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts,* Lam. i. 4. The solemn assemblies of the people of GOD may be scattered, their teachers removed into corners, and both ministers and people persecuted, imprisoned, &c. so that ministers cannot have access to preach, nor people to hear the word, nor be in a corner, but with the peril of their lives.

2. *With respect to inward power and efficacy.* Though people enjoy the gospel with great outward liberty; yet the influences of the spirit may be restrained, Christ's presence may be withdrawn, and the power of his grace not exerted and put forth; so that the gospel may have small or no success. The angel comes not down to trouble the waters, so that few or no cures are wrought. Few or none are brought in to Christ; and serious Christians are not quickened, strengthened and refreshed in the use of the ordinances as sometimes they have been: so that ministers, even after much preaching, may have cause to go back to GOD with a sad complaint, that their message is not taken off their hand, and that they can see no fruit of their labours; saying with the Prophet, *Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* Isa. liii. 1. And *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain,* Isa. xlix. 4.

But why doth the Lord sometimes bring glorious gospel days, days of the Son of man, under such a sad restraint? I answer, for these reasons; 1. To correct and chastise his ministers and people for their former abuse of such gospel days, when they enjoyed them. 2. To raise the price of them in their esteem.

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When there was no open vision, then the word of the Lord was precious: 1 Sam. iii. 1. not more precious in itself. but more precious in the esteem and account of the Lord's people. GOD teacheth people to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them. 3. To awaken and quicken their dull and drowsy hearts to their duty; to stir them up to repentance, and to earnest wrestling with GOD in prayer. *I will go, says the Lord, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: In their affliction they will seek me early, Hosea v. 15.*

Prop. III. *Such restraints of gospel days, days of the Son of man, use to awaken the desires and longings of gracious souls.*

The days will come, says our Saviour, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man. Once we had glorious gospel days, but now these days are gone. O to enjoy such days again! O that we might see but one of the days of the Son of man! This is the temper and disposition of gracious souls, when there is any restraint of gospel days: they long for the outward liberty and freedom of the gospel, *When shall I come, says the Psalmist, and appear before GOD, viz. in the public assemblies of his people, Psal. xlii. 2.* And, *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, Psal. lxxxiv. 2.* And they long for the inward power and efficacy, even *To see the power and glory of GOD in the sanctuary, Psal. lxiii. 2.*

But whence is it that gracious souls have such longing desire after glorious gospel days, when they are under a restraint?

1. *Love to Christ* sets their hearts a longing. Gospel-days are *Days of the Son of man.* They are *his victorious and triumphant days:* and such is their love to him, that they have a deep concern for his honour, the glory of his grace, the credit of his gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom. Again, They are *days of communion with him,* and out of love to him they would gladly have his company, enjoy his presence, and have near communion with him in his ordinances.
2. *Compassion toward precious immortal souls* sets them a longing. They see many sleeping in their sins, going on in sin to their ruin, posting to hell, and perishing for want of Christ: and they see among the Lord's own children much deadness, darkness, lukewarmness, uncleanness, decays of love to GOD and to one another; even

life virgins sleeping and slumbering. Therefore they long for glorious gospel days, days of Christ's power, that dead sinners may be raised to life, and the spiritual life cherished and increased in the hearts of his people, by his voice in the gospel, John v. *Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?* Psal lxxxv. 6. 3. *Sense of need* sets their hearts a longing. They sometimes see what a sad case their own souls are in, their graces weak, their corruptions strong, their temptations many, and their work great and above their strength. They are sensible what need there is to have their graces quickened, nourished, and strengthened; and to have their corruptions mortified and subdued. Therefore they long for glorious gospel-days, days of the power of G O D, that supplies of grace and strength may be communicated to their souls in the use of the ordinances, and that their souls may be fat and flourishing in the house of G O D. Experience sets them a longing. It may be they have formerly seen glorious gospel days, days of the Son of man, and have on such days had refreshing experiences of the love and grace of G O D; therefore they long to see such days again. The Psalmist longed *to see the power and glory of G O D*, as he had seen *him in the sanctuary*, Psal. lxiii. 2. At least they have had the experiences of others imparted and made known to them. They have read or heard of glorious gospel days in the church of Christ, and in the days of their fathers, and what blessed days these were: therefore they wish and long to see such days of the Son of man as their fathers have seen. *O renew our days as of old!* Psal. v. 21.

Prop. IV. *Gospel days, days of the Son of man, may come to be so great a restraint, that though gracious souls much desire and long for them, yet they cannot have them.*

They shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, says Christ, *ye shall not see it.* The time may come when even such as are dear to G O D may earnestly wish for such days in vain. So they may understand that text, *They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north, even to the east: they shall run to and fro, to and fro, but shall not find it, the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*, Amos viii. 12. These words may be extended so far as to take in even those who from a sincere love to the word should earnestly desire and long to hear a good sermon, and yet not obtain it. The earnest desires

desires and longings even of GOD's own children after days of the Son of man may be ineffectual. GOD can and doth make up the want of such days to them; but sometimes they cannot prevail for a sinful generation wherein they live. The truth of this hath been verified by the sad experience of the people of GOD in this land in the late evil times. The time was when some, even among yourselves, did wish and long to see one of the days of the Son of man, and yet could not see it: and what hath been may be.

I proceed now to the *Application*.

Use 1. For Lamentation. Alas! that the truth of my doctrine should be in so great a measure amplified in our times that *gospel-days, days of the Son of man*, are under so great restraint. Blessed be GOD there is no restraint as to *outward liberty*: but O what restraint there is as to *inward power and efficacy*! We have heard of GOD's stately and majestic goings in the sanctuary in the days of our fathers; but, alas! these days are gone: and some of us have been witnesses to more of the power and presence of Christ in ordinances and in the assemblies of his people, than there is now. We have gospel ordinances in great purity and plenty; but O how little is there of the life and power of them! Alas! the golden showers are restrained, the influences of the spirit suspended: so that conversion-work is very rare: few sons and daughters are born unto GOD; and the hearts of serious Christians are not so quickened, warmed and refreshed under the ordinances as sometimes they have been. O how sad is this! and yet how few lay it to heart? Alas, the Bridegroom is away! and yet we do not fast and mourn.

But whence is it that there is so great a restraint of *glorious days of the Son of man*, in regard of power and efficacy? I shall only mention some culpable causes of this on our part. No doubt the sins, even of the ministers of Christ, have great influence on this. All I shall say on this head is, if there were less affectation of popular applause and praise from men; if there were more self-denied preaching; if we did singly aim at the glory and honour of our blessed master; and if we were more earnest for his presence, and his blessing on our labours; I doubt not we should soon see better days. But let me mention some culpable causes on the people's part, as, 1. *Using gospel or*

ances as man's ordinances rather than Christ's. Many of you do not value sermons by Christ's presence in them, but by the gifts of the preacher. If you have a fine, neat, handsome discourse, when you think all is well. Polite language, fineness of expression, and pleasantness of delivery, are the only things that commend sermons to many of you. Hence, 2. *Resting on the ordinances*, as if their efficacy were from some virtue in themselves. Many of you attend the ordinances with seeming diligence, you hear the word, and partake of the sacrament; but, alas! you rest on the work done and have no concern for the presence and blessing of Christ. This is to idolize the ordinances, and to set them in Christ's room. 3. *People's pleasing themselves with bare ordinances*, without a regard to the end of them. They do not use them as means of acquaintance and communion with GOD. Some of you are seemingly zealous for the purity of ordinances, and flock to sermons and communions; but, alas! you please yourselves with bare ordinances, and are well enough satisfied, though you have no communion with GOD in them. 4. *Idolizing ministers*. Some are for this minister, and others for that minister. If you have such a minister to preach to you, you think all well; if you want him, then you think all is wrong. What is this but to set up ministers in Christ's room? Oh that you would learn to look less to ministers, and more to Christ! and not to put such a difference between honest and faithful ministers as many of you do. 5. *Neglect of secret communion with GOD*. When you are careless of entertaining communion with Christ in secret duties, is it any wonder if he deny you communion with him in public ordinances? Particularly, neglect of secret prayer. We might expect more of Christ's presence in the public ordinances, if we did plead more earnestly in secret prayer for his presence, that we might bring him alongst with us to the public assembly. 6. *Sad divisions, heart-burnings and animosities among the Lord's people*. In the primitive times when the people of GOD met together with one accord, and there was much love among them, then were there *glorious days of the Son of man*; Acts ii. 1. when they were of one heart and of one soul, then there was great power, and great grace was upon them all, Acts iv. 2. But, alas! now, instead of holy unity and concord, there are charitable contentions, and strifes and debates; and instead

of love, too much sinful passion, wrath, envy and bitterness of spirit: and these things grieve *the Holy Spirit*, and banish him away from our solemn assemblies.

Use 2. For Warning. Oh! what cause have we to fear, lest the days come when there shall be also a restraint of such *days of the Son of Man*, as we now enjoy, a restraint as to *outward liberty and freedom*? Now you have the gospel in great purity and plenty; you have frequent opportunities of gospel ordinances, and access to the solemn assemblies with great outward liberty: but the days may come when ye shall wish and long to see one of *the days of the Son of Man*, one such day as you now have, and shall not see it. Wicked enemies may prevail, at least for a time, and your teachers may be removed into corners; so that you cannot have such precious opportunities as you now have, at least not without fear, yea, not but with the peril of your lives.

I say we have great cause to fear this; and I shall lay before you these *grounds of fear*. 1. There is hardly any one sin for which GOD has formerly deprived a people of glorious gospel days, but the same is to be found among us. It was for *horrible prophaneness* that GOD removed the ark from Shiloh. It was for *the contempt of the world and ordinances*, and wearying of them, that GOD plagued his ancient people with a *famine of the word*, and made their sacred solemnities to cease. Amos viii. 5, 11, 12. It was for *barrenness and unfruitfulness* that he laid waste his *vineyard*, and would water it no more. Isa. v. 4, 5, 6. It was for *rejecting the offers of the gospel* that GOD took away the gospel from the Jews, and sent it to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 45, 46. He removed the candlestick from Ephesus because she had *left her first love and first works*; and from Laodicea, for her detestable lukewarmness. Rev. ii. 5, 13, 16. Now it is very plain and evident how much all these evils abound among us at this day. 2. GOD hath deprived them of such days of the Son of Man as we now enjoy, who had much more to plead for the continuance of them than we have. I give instance in GOD's ancient people: GOD had great love to them and did great and wonderful things for them; he dignified them with glorious titles, and conferred on them great privileges; yet the kingdom of GOD was taken away from them, and the

salvation

salvation of GOD sent to the Gentiles. And seeing such sins abound among us as provoked GOD to deal so with them, upon what ground can we expect that he will spare us? Is Scotland better than Judah, or Edinburgh better than Jerusalem? Are our privileges greater than their's? What have we to plead that they had not? Yea, they had more to plead than we; so that we have the more cause to be afraid. 3. Are not our unhappy divisions and contests a sad presage of this judgment? The remarkable departures of GOD from the Jews, found them sadly divided and crumbled into parties; and sad divisions made way for the fall and ruin of the seven churches of Asia. O that we may take warning from these things! 4. What shall we think of the great growth of popery in this land? We have had sad and lamentable accounts sent up to us from diverse places in this land, of the great growth of Popery in them these years past, and that it is still on the growing hand: Is there no ground of fear here? What if GOD should for our sins permit Popery yet once more to break in upon us like a deluge? Then our glorious days of the Son of Man are gone. 5. Have we no cause to fear this judgment, when we are already under the beginnings of it? GOD hath departed in a great measure from his sanctuary; he hath withdrawn his presence from his ordinances, as I have already shewed you. And when he himself goes, we have no reason to think that his gospel and ordinances shall be left behind.

We see then that we want not great *grounds of fear* that we may be deprived of these gospel days, *days of the Son of Man*, that we now enjoy: and O how sad will our case be, if GOD deal so with us! *Consider*, 1. These days of the Son of Man that we now enjoy are excellent and choice days. They are glorious days, wherein the glorious sun of the gospel shines brightly, so that our light is as the light of seven days. They are great market-days, wherein Christ and his precious wares are set forth upon the stands of the gospel, to be bought without money and without price. They are solemn feast days, wherein soul-nourishing and soul-refreshing provision is dispensed in the use of the ordinances. They are joyful days wherein we have access to hear the sweetest melody, the glad tidings of peace and salvation. O they are sweet and pleasant days! What cause have

we to cry out with the *Psalmist*, *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts! One day in thy Courts is better than a thousand*, *Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 10.* O how unhappy are we, if by our sins we banish away such days! 2. Consider how sad our case will be, if we shall be deprived of these blessed days. Then the glory of our land is gone. We may lament with *Phinehas* his wife, *The glory is departed from Israel: 1 Sam. iv. 22.* And with the church, *The crown is fallen from our head: Wo unto us that we have sinned, Lam. v. 16.* And as to particular persons; if these glorious gospel days go from us, then such as are yet in an unregenerate condition, living without *GOD* and without *Christ* in the world, are like to die and perish in a *Christ-less* state: And how sad may the condition even of gracious persons be, when they want these revivings and refreshings that now sometimes they enjoy under the precious ordinances? 3. When these gospel days are gone, O how bitterly will ye lament the want of them, if you have any suitable sense of what concerns your precious souls! The loss will be matter of grief to you, as it was to the *Psalmist*; *When I remember these things*, says he, *I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of GOD with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day. Psal. xlii. 4.* When you are deprived of those days of the *Son of Man*, you will then be more sensible of the worth of them, and the loss will be bitter and grievous to you, especially when you reflect on your own sins as the procuring cause of it. 4. You may never see such days again; *The days may come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. GOD* seldom restores the gospel to a people whom he hath once deprived of it.

Use 3. For Exhortation, in two branches.

Exhort. 1. Diligently improve such days of the *Son of Man*, such days of gospel-liberty as ye now enjoy, so long as ye have them. In these years of plenty lay up in store for days of famine. If such days come, it will be of great advantage so to do; and if they come not, it will be no loss.

Consider, 1. These days of the *Son of Man* that we enjoy, are great blessings and privileges; yea, such blessings and privileges as *GOD* hath denied to many dear to him, though much de-

red by them. I may say to you as our blessed Saviour said to his disciples, *Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them*, Mat. xiii. 17. The saints of GOD under the Old Testament had not such glorious gospel days as we now enjoy; they lived under a dark dispensation. The light now is as *the light of seven days*, in comparison of what it was then. Now, our advantages being great, GOD expects a proportionable improvement of them. 2. The gospel days we enjoy are talents entrusted to us; they are not merely gifts to be enjoyed, but talents to be improved for the glory of GOD and our own good. 3. An account will certainly be required of us; and *unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*, Luke xii. 48. Having so great privileges and advantages, we shall have much to count and reckon for. Our misimprovement of such *days of the Son of man* will cost us dear. It may provoke GOD to deprive us of them; and it may bring heavy wrath on us in this life, and eternal wrath and vengeance in the life to come.

For direction. 1. *Prize and value these gospel days highly. O that one day in GOD's Courts may be better to you than a thousand!* Psal. cxiv. 10. These *days of the Son of man* that we enjoy are inestimable blessings, and such days have been dear and precious to the saints in all ages. 2. *Diligently attend the public ordinances.* Be not so far the world's underlings as to suffer your worldly business to be an hinderance to you: and attend these precious ordinances with joy and pleasure; as the Psalmist did; *I was glad, when they said unto me, let us go up unto the house of the LORD*, Psal. cxxii. 1. O let sermon days, and Sabbath days, and communion days, be joyful and pleasant days to you. 3. *Pursue the great ends and designs of the ordinances.* They are appointed to bring you near GOD, to promote your acquaintance and communion with him, to feed and nourish, strengthen and refresh your souls. Now pursue these ends with holy vigor and earnestness. See that you embrace and close with Christ, that in his blood you may *be made nigh*, Eph. ii. 13. Let your hearts be set upon communion with GOD in his ordinances, and account these ordinances to be but empty, in which you do not and meet with him. 4. *Be earnest to feel the power of these ordinances,*

ordinances, and to taste the sweetness of them in your own souls. Do not satisfy yourselves with bare ordinances, but look for the efficacy of them, to unite your souls to GOD through Christ, to mortify your lusts, to quicken and enliven your graces, and to confirm, strengthen and refresh your souls in the way of the Lord.

Exhort. 2. *Desire and long earnestly after such days of the Son of man, as sometimes the church of Christ, and this church hath enjoyed, and it may be some of yourselves have seen; days of Christ's power and presence in and with the ordinances of the gospel: days wherein his power and glory may be seen in the sanctuary. By desiring and longing for such days, discover that you have the frame and temper of gracious souls within you.*

To engage you to this, consider 1. How sad our case is through the want of such days. Though we have gospel ordinances in great purity and plenty; yet so long as there is such a sad restraint as to inward power and efficacy, whilst there is such a sad suspension of heavenly influences, Christ's glory is obscured and his name suffers: his ordinances are lifeless things, without power: the churches beauty is quite marred: she sits as a widow alone, and hath a barren womb and dry breasts for the most part: sinners are held captive by Satan, and the prey is not delivered out of his hands: and O! what deadness, darkness, barrenness, and sad decays and witherings of soul are there among the children of GOD? On these accounts the church of Scotland doth not look with that face that sometimes she hath done. *Oh, How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed!* Lam. iv. 1. *Our silver is become dross, our wine is mixt with water,* Isa. i. 22. 2. Such days of the Son of man as the church once enjoyed, days of his power, if we had them would be happy days, eminent and glorious days, Isa. i. 2. 1. They would be *glorious to Christ*. His stately and majestic goings would be then seen in the sanctuary, and he would in his Majesty ride prosperously; so that he would be crowned with manifold victories and conquests over the hearts and souls of men; they would be his *Coronation days*, Cant. iii. 11. 2. They would be *happy days to the church*. The increase and glory of the church would then be promoted. The church is dignified with

he title of *Jehovah Shammah*, i. e. *the Lord is there*, Ezek. xlviii. 5. Christ's presence in the church, and with his ordinances, is the glory of the church. Such glorious gospel-days would make the church *look beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*, Cant vi. 4, 10. Christ's presence would fill the ordinances with power and virtue; so that the church would become a fruitful mother of children, son's and daughters would be born unto GOD; and sermon-days, Sabbath-days, and communion-days, would be quite another thing than they are now. 3. Such days would be *happy days to particular members of the church*. They would be days of liberty and enlargement to the slaves and captives of Satan; and days of preferment to sinful dust, enemies to GOD being made friends, the children of the devil made the sons and daughters of the living GOD, and heirs of hell made heirs of heaven. And O what sweet soul-reviving and soul-refreshing days would they be to the children of GOD! What life, and love, and zeal, and tenderness, would there be among us? And add, that such days of Christ's power would be a blessed token of good, with respect to the great and glorious things GOD hath promised to and for his church in the latter days.

Well then, desire and long for glorious days of *the Son of man*, days of the power of GOD; such days wherein his power and glory may be seen in the sanctuary. O to see such *days of the Son of man*! Let your desires be ardent and vehement desires; and continued and constant desires, and not for a fit and in some good mood only. To awaken and quicken such desires, think on what I have already represented concerning the excellency of such days of the Son of man, and our sad case through the want of them. Think on the days of old, when the church enjoyed such gospel days: O how well was it with her then! O for such days again! Improve former experiences for awakening your desires. Dear Christians, have you never seen glorious days of *the Son of man*, when his goings were seen in the sanctuary? O how happy would ye be, if ye could see such days again?

But see that your desires be active and working desires. They must not be lazy and slothful desires, but such desires as put you upon earnest and vigorous endeavours to obtain such days of the Son of man: therefore, 1. When you go home, retire to your closet,

closet, and lament the want of such days. Do as the people of GOD did in the days of Samuel, *All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord*, 1 Sam. vii. 3. How sad is it that the Bridegroom is away! but it will be yet more sad, if we do not mourn in such a season. 2. Labour to have these sins removed that have provoked GOD to bring these glorious days under such a sad restraint. Lament them both in yourselves and others. Mourn for the dishonour done to GOD by them. Reform your own hearts and lives; and labour in your place and station to reform others. *Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Zach. 1. 3. Flee to the blood of Christ, and labour to make peace with an offended GOD through him. 3. Give vent to your desires in prayer. Pray with the church. *Renew our days as of old.* Lam. v. 21. *Return for thy servants sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.* Is. lxiii. 17. *Return, we beseech thee, O GOD of hosts: look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted; and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand: upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thyself.* Psal. lxxx. 14, 15, 17. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants; and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our GOD be upon us.* Psal. xc. 16, 17. Cry for the manifestations of his power and presence in his ordinances and the assemblies of his people. Be more frequent in prayer for this, and be more fervent in prayer. Stir up yourselves to take hold of GOD, and wrestle with him as Jacob did. Join together in prayer for it; for joint prayers are most prevalent. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;* James 5. 16. much more the effectual fervent prayers of many righteous joining together. And be more importunate in prayer for this blessing. Take hold of GOD and let him not go without a blessing. Do as the spouse did, *held him, says she, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.* Cant. 3. 4. Prels hard, and be not put off with seeming denial and repulses. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Is. lxii. 7.

S E R M O N II.

Before the LORD's SUPPER.

A Persuasive to Preparation for the LORD's Supper, from the great Sin and Danger of unworthy Communicating.

I COR. xi. 27, 28, 29, 30.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

But let a Man examine himself; and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.

For this Cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

THE Apostle, for reforming secret abuses that had crept in among the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper, reduceth them to the consideration of the first institution, whereof he gives an account from the 23d verse to the 27th. His scope in the verses I have read is to press them to a worthy participation of that great ordinance.

In these verses we have,

1. *A solemn warning of the great sin of unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper, v. 27.*

2. *A direction for the right participation thereof, that so great sin may be prevented, v. 28.*

3. *An argument for enforcing this direction, taken from the great danger of neglecting it, v. 29, 30.*

1. *A solemn warning of the great sin of unworthy partaking of the sacrament.* This is drawn as an interence from what goes before, verse 27. *Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, &c.* (Wherefore) q. d. Seeing Christ appointed this ordinance as a memorial of him, to keep up the practical and affective remembrance

brance of him and his death in the hearts and minds of his people; and seeing it is our duty in partaking to show his death: Therefore to use the ordinance in an unbecoming manner, is a reflection on the authority of Christ who instituted it, and contrary to the ends of the institution, and involves us in the guilt of his death.

Particular'y, we have in this verse these two things, 1. *What they are that contract this guilt; such as eat and drink unworthily.* He speaks not of a legal worthiness, or a worthiness of the person. He says not, whatsoever unworthy person eats and drinks; for then he had excluded even the best Christians, seeing all are unworthy. But he speaks of an *evangelical worthiness* and a *worthiness of the action*; and so, to eat and drink unworthily, is to eat and drink with a frame and disposition that is unsuitable to and unbecoming that holy ordinance. And mark that he says, *This bread and this cup*, i. e. the wine in the cup; to shew that it is bread and wine still, even after the consecration of the elements. If the bread and wine were transubstantiated into Christ's real body and blood, as the Papists absurdly plead they are, then the apostle's argument had been stronger to have said, "There is no more bread and wine here, but the real body and blood of Christ; therefore your unworthy carriage is a wrong done immediately to the person of Christ." But he terms it *bread and cup*, and calls it so three several times, v. 26, 27, 28. And why would he call it so often bread, if it were not bread? Yet he calls it the *bread and cup of the Lord*, to distinguish it from bread and wine of an ordinary use. Though it be bread and wine, yet it is sacred, appointed by him for such an holy use, to be the memorial of his body and blood; therefore to use it unworthily must be a great sin. 2. *What the guilt is that is contracted thereby; a being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; i. e. guilty of offering a great wrong and injury to Christ, whose body and blood is represented by the outward elements; yea, chargeable with no less crime than the guilt of the blood of Christ.*

II. *A direction for right participation, that we may not contract so great a guilt, v. 28. But let a man examine himself, &c [But let a man; i. e. if a man would prevent so great a sin; if he would not be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, let him examine himself]*

examine himself. We may notice here, 1. *The preparation required.* Let a man examine himself. [Let] him examine; i. e. he must examine; for that word hath here the force of a command, Let him deny himself; Luke ix. 23. i. e. He must deny himself. A Man, [i. e. every man, every Christian man, whether he be a sincere believer in Christ or not; yea, though he hath often partaken worthily before, let him examine himself.] The word signifies not only to try and prove, but also to approve. It is to examine ourselves so as to be approved or allowed, as the same word is rendered. Rom. 14. 22. It is such an examination as issues in a comfortable approbation. The apostle under this comprehends the whole of our preparation: for his meaning cannot be, that having examined ourselves, we should without any more ado come immediately to the sacrament, whatever our state or frame be; but he comprehends under it such graces and duties as are or ought to be the issue of our examination: let him examine himself, and perform the duties suitable to that state wherein he finds himself after serious enquiry. 2. *The manner of participation.* And so let him eat, &c. and not otherwise; not without examination: so, upon that condition; and so, with that preparation. If after examination find himself in a gracious state, and that he hath a suitable time and disposition, then let him eat and drink. But if he find himself in a state of sin and death, let him believe in Christ, repent; and so let him eat and drink, and not else: and let him come so, every time he partakes. And let him both eat the bread, and drink of the cup: so that the sacrament is to be received in both kinds, bread and wine.

II. *An argument to enforce this direction*, taken from the great danger of neglecting preparation work. This is, 1. *Asserted*, 1. Cor. 11. 29. 2. *Confirmed*, by the experience of the Corinthians themselves, verse 30.

1) It is asserted in these words, for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. And it follows the cause of all, not discerning the Lord's body. It is plainly implied, that such as do not examine and prepare, and drink unworthily: and that which is exprest is, that by not so, they eat and drink damnation, original judgment, or punishment, which is either temporal, or spiritual, or eternal. It is a

sin that deserves damnation in all. It brings certain damnation on such as do not repent and flee to Christ: and even believers themselves, who neglect actual preparation, and partake in an unworthy frame, expose themselves to GOD's severe correction: as appears from verse 30. He *eats and drinks damnation or judgment: i. e.* he eats and drinks that which will be the cause of judgment, not in itself, but by the evil disposition of his own heart: therefore it is added to himself; the fault is wholly in himself, not in the ordinance; to himself, and not to others: so that the unworthy partaking of some doth not pollute the ordinance to others. Then we have the cause of all, whence it is that a man eats and drinks unworthily and so eats and drinks judgment to himself; his *not discerning the Lord's body; i. e.* not duly esteeming and honouring his body, counting it as a common thing, and his blood as common blood: or, not putting difference between the bread and wine in the sacrament, as common bread and wine; not regarding them as symbols of Christ's body and blood.

(2.) The danger of unworthy receiving is confirmed by the experience of the Corinthians themselves, verse 30. *For the cause; i. e.* for eating and drinking unworthily, *many are weak and sickly, &c* GOD had smitten many of the Corinthians: some with bodily weakness, others with sickness, and others with temporal death, for their unworthy partaking of the sacrament: and it is clear from the context, that some who were so dejected with were believers in Christ: therefore he adds, verse 31. *We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned of the world.*

The doctrine I propose from these verses is this,

The consideration of the great sin and danger of unworthy partaking of the sacrament should be improven by Christians, to awaken and quicken them to suitable preparation for that great ordinance, that so they may partake worthily.

For here, the apostle having warned them of the great sin of unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper, does thereupon direct them to preparation-work, that so great a sin might be prevented: and then he enforceth this direction by an argument taken from the great danger of eating and drinking unworthily.

In handling this doctrine, I shall,

1. Shew *what it is to partake unworthily of the Lord's Supper*; or, when Christians may be said to do so.
2. Speak of *the greatness of the sin of unworthy partaking*, as it is here expressed by the apostle.
3. Speak of *the great danger of eating and drinking unworthily*.
4. Clear and confirm this truth, that *the consideration of the great sin and danger of unworthy partaking of the sacrament should be improved by Christians, to awaken and quicken them to suitable preparation, that they may partake worthily*.
5. Shew *what preparation is required in order to our worthy partaking of the sacrament*; that so we may not contract so great a guilt, nor incur so great danger.

I shall study to be practical on all these heads.

First, What it is to partake of the sacrament unworthily; or, when may Christians be said to do so. It appears from the context, that they eat and drink unworthily who come without preparation. Now, there is a twofold preparation required, habitual and actual: and so there is a twofold unworthiness, 1. *An unworthiness of state.* 2. *An unworthiness of frame.*

1. *An unworthiness of state*; which may be called habitual unworthiness. When a person comes to the table of the Lord in a graceless state, not being renewed or regenerated by the spirit, nor reconciled to GOD through Christ. We read in the description of Ezekiel's temple, that such as were *uncircumcised in heart were not to enter into the sanctuary*, Exek. xlv. 9. So unrenewed and unregenerate sinners are not to approach to that holy table. All that partake of the sacrament in an unrenewed and unregenerated state do *eat and drink unworthily*. The reasons are, 1. Because they are enemies to GOD: for *the carnal mind is enmity against GOD*. Rom. viii. 7. They are *enemies in their minds by wicked works*. Col. i. 21. But the sacrament is GOD's feast; a feast for friends, and not for enemies; for real friends, and not for lip-friends and heart-enemies. It is an ordinance of the highest and most intimate communion: and intimate communion is only for bosom-friends. 2. Unrenewed persons are *unsanctified, not washen from their filthiness*, and so are not fit guests for such an holy table: only sanctified persons

persons are fit guests. Our Lord prefigured this by washing his disciples feet before the supper. John xiii. 8, 10. Unrenewed persons are dogs in the account of the Spirit of GOD; and holy things must not be given to dogs. What right can they have to the children's bread? The livery of the Devil doth not suit the table of the Lord. 3. Unrenewed persons are not in covenant with GOD. They are *strangers to the covenant of promise*, Eph. ii. 12. and consequently have nothing to do with the seal of the covenant; not being within the covenant, the benefits and privileges thereof belong not to them. 4. They are incapable of spiritual nourishment. They are void of the spiritual life, and therefore incapable of the nourishment of that life. They are dead: and what hath a dead man to do with a feast? 5. They cannot relish Christ in the ordinance. Men are in no capacity to relish spiritual things without a new nature. They may eat the bread, and drink the wine, in the sacrament; but cannot taste or relish any of the spiritual dainties that are dispensed there to worthy receivers: so that they partake of the sacrament unworthily.

2. *An unworthiness of frame and disposition.* Christians may be in a good state, and yet in no good frame. Even believers in Christ, and such as are renewed by grace, may be guilty of eating and drinking unworthily. The apostle, in the context, chargeth this sin even on believers in Corinth; and shews that the Lord chastised them as a gracious father with weakness and sickness, that they might not be condemned by him as a just judge.

Now, such of you as are believers in Christ, are guilty of *eating and drinking unworthily*, in these cases, 1. When you neglect actual preparation and self-examination. For the apostle here enjoins preparation to prevent the sin of unworthy receiving; *but let a man examine himself*, i. e. if he would not be guilty of eating and drinking unworthily, then let him examine: and let *a man*, i. e. every man, whether a believer or an unbeliever. So that you eat and drink unworthily, when there is not a due preparation suitable to the nature and greatness of the ordinance. 2. When you come to the sacrament under the guilt of known sins not actually repented of. *He that is washed*, says our Lord, *needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean*

can every whit. John xiii. 10. Though you be washen by
 begun renovation, and the sanctification of your persons; yet
 ere needs a new washing, from the new defilements you con-
 tact by walking up and down in a dirty and defiling world:
 on prophane the ordinance, if you come unwashen. The
 Psalmist's resolution is, *I will wash mine hands in innocency; so*
will I compass thine altar, O LORD. Psal. xxvi. 6. If you do
 not come so, you eat and drink unworthily. 3. When grace
 not in exercise, and particularly sacramental graces; such as
 with, love, godly sorrow for sin, hungering desires after Christ
 and his grace, &c. When there is a restraint upon your graces,
 that they do not flow out in exercise, and your spikenard
 both not send forth the smell thereof; when you are not at
 pains to rub the rust off your graces, and to awaken and quicken
 them, that they may be in a fit posture to meet the Lord in that
 great ordinance; then you partake unworthily. 4. When there
 is a looseness and carelessness of spirit in receiving. It is true,
 wandering thoughts haunt the best Christians, even in their best
 duties: but when you are careless of your own hearts, and give
 loose reins to them, and are not at pains to pull them in, but
 give way to unsettled and raving thoughts, not endeavouring to
 fix your thoughts on a dying Christ, and to attend to the my-
 steries represented in the ordinance; then you eat and drink
 unworthily.

But whence is it that many partake of the sacrament unworthily?
 mention only the cause given in the text, *not discerning the*
Lord's body in the sacrament, when they do not look through
 the bread and wine to the broken body and shed blood of Christ
 that are thereby represented. Many are ignorant of the nature
 and ends of the sacrament. Others that have some knowledge,
 do not consider the end of it, and the glorious use that the ele-
 ments are designed to; and so make light of the dignity of the
 ordinance, putting no difference between the bread and wine
 here, and common bread and wine: so that you do not discern
 the Lord's body in the sacrament, when you fix on the outward
 elements, as if these were the only things you are called to feast
 on, and do not look through the vail of the bread and wine to a
 broken and bleeding Christ, and the glorious blessings that are
 the sweet fruits of his sacrifice. 2. People do not discern the
 Lord's

Lord's body in the sacrament, when they do not consider the greatness and glory of that body which the elements represent when they do not discern it so as to esteem and honour it as they ought. Many put no difference between the body of Christ and the body of a mere man. It is said of apostates, that they count *the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, original a common thing* Heb. x. 29. So, you do not discern the Lord's body in the supper, when you have no higher opinion of his body and blood than of a common thing; or do not regard his body and blood there represented according to their true worth: when you do not consider and regard it as the body of GOD, *GOD blessed for ever*, as an offering and sacrifice for sin, and the price of our peace and pardon, and all other covenant blessings.

Now, because people do not discern the Lord's body in the sacrament, therefore it is that they eat and drink unworthily. They come to it as to common bread, or a common table, and do not seriously mind preparation work. If men did rightly understand, and seriously consider the glorious use that the elements are appointed unto, and how great and glorious a thing the body of the Lord is which they represent, they would certainly be pains to prepare, that they might not come unworthily. Again, not discerning the Lord's body, is the cause that many are so irreverent in the use of the sacrament: and in serious Christians mars and obstructs the exercise of suitable graces in partaking of that ordinance.

Secondly, I come in the next place to speak of *the greatness of the sin of unworthy partaking*, as it is here expressed by the apostle: *such are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. This may be understood in a twofold sense. Only observe, that what I am to say on this head, is chiefly applicable to such as partake unworthily in an high degree, that come to the sacrament in an unrenewed and unregenerate state, and while they are not reconciled to GOD through Christ.

I. The unworthy partaker is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, that is, *he is guilty of a great affront and indignity done to the Son of GOD*. It is an undervaluing him, and a great affront offered to him, when you come to his table in your filthy needs, as if his body and blood were food fit for dogs and swine.

The bread and wine are signs and pledges of his body and blood; he is represented by them: therefore, he that uses and handles them unworthily, is a contemner of *the Son of GOD*, and affronts his body and blood in that picture and representation of him.

2. The unworthy partaker is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, *he is guilty of murdering Christ*, and that in several respects; 1. The unworthy partaker is a murderer of Christ, *in regard of the disposition of his heart*. That disposition of heart that carries any of you to prophane that holy ordinance would also have carried you to crucify Christ, if you had been among the Jews in the days of his flesh: so that there is the same disposition of heart toward Christ in an unworthy partaker that was in the Jews that crucified him; and consequently there is the same guilt in the eye of GOD, seeing he judges of men by their inward frame and the disposition of their hearts. To come to Christ's table with an heart-enmity against him, is to be the murderer of him. When ye come in your sins, ye come hugging Christ's enemies in your bosom. It is as if you would make much of the nails and spear that pierced him. It is to *crucify the Lord of glory afresh*. 2. The unworthy partaker is a murderer of Christ interpretatively. Contemptuously to abuse the image or picture of a prince is, in some places, reckoned capital and unreasonable: it is interpreted as done to his person, because it is presumed that the man would do the same to his person, if it were as much in his power. So the sacrament is an image or picture of a crucified Christ: the bread and wine being memorials and pledges of his body and blood; therefore the injury done to the outward elements is as done to Christ himself. The unworthy using his image is reckoned as done to his person. The unworthy partaker is a murderer of Christ by consent and approbation. In the sacrament Christ's death is shewed forth; he is there represented as crucified before your eyes: if you be not duly affected with such a spectacle; if you can look on a broken, bleeding, dying Christ in the sacrament, with an unbroken heart, then you do implicitly consent to and approve the act of the Jews in crucifying him. Our not mourning for the sins of others, makes us partakers in the guilt. So, when there are no suitable affections raised in your soul, in looking on a

crucified Christ in that image and picture of him, then you will be reckoned the murderers of him, and consenters to his death.

Yea, the sin of unworthy receivers is worse than the sin of the Jews in crucifying Christ. They pretended a law among them whereby he ought to die: but what pretence can any of you have for your unworthy using him in the sacrament? They did it ignorantly; they supposed him to be a mere man, yea, a malefactor: but you profess to believe that he is *the only begotten Son of GOD*; and your sin is against more clear and full ritual discoveries of him in the gospel. They sinned against him in his low estate: but your sin is against him in his exalted state. Their's was against his person; your's against his propitiation. Their's against his humane life; your's against his mediatory office. Ye have been baptized in his name, and have given up your names to him, and engaged to serve and obey him, which they did not. They never owned him as the true Messiah; but you profess to own him for your Lord and Saviour. You pretend to adore and worship him: this makes your crime the more horrid.

Well then, though the sacrament be a very desireable ordinance, yet you need to take heed how you use it. If you come unworthily, without suitable preparation; if you come in your sins to that holy table, your guilt will be very great. Consider what a horrid crime it is to be guilty of the blood of an ordinary man, yea, of a prophane atheistical wretch: but how much more horrid must it be, to be guilty of the body and blood of the glorified Son of GOD, of him who came to be our Saviour. Yet every time you partake unworthily by coming in your sins you have no less than the guilt of his body and blood upon your head. O! how base and unworthy is it to sit down at Christ's table with an hostile disposition against him? To sit at the glorious master of the feast at his own table, when he is offering to entertain you with his royal dainties.

Thirdly, I proceed to speak of *the great danger of unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper*. The punishment is very dreadful. Such as eat and drink unworthily, *eat and drink damnation, or Judgment to themselves*. It is a sin that brings on

judgment

judgments, which will end in damnation, if not prevented by repentance. Under the Old Testament, such as came in their uncleanness to partake of holy things, were to be *cut off from their people*; Lev. vii. 19. i. e. excluded from fellowship with the people of GOD. Now, their holy things were but shadows and types of Christ, and the blessings of his purchase, and represented Christ to come and suffer: but in the sacrament Christ is, in a lively manner, represented as having already come and suffered; and moral uncleanness is much worse than ceremonial. O then, what dreadful wrath and vengeance do they expose themselves unto, who come to this ordinance in their moral uncleanness! We read that *plagues come out of the temple*, Rev. xv. 7. that is, great judgments from ordinances unworthily used.

Particularly, unworthy partakers of the sacrament are punished with *temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments*.

1. With *temporal judgments*: For this sin GOD smote many of the Corinthians; yea, even believers among them; some with weakness, others with sickness, and others with death, v. 30. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For this cause*; i. e. because they did eat and drink unworthily. Some think that GOD had sent the pestilence among them, because of this sin. We read that *king Hezekiah prayed for the people that came to the passover*: and it is said, v. 20. *That the Lord harkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people*: 2 Chr. xxx. 18, 19. GOD had smitten them with some plague or sickness for partaking of that sacrament without suitable preparation. Solemn ordinances are tender things; It is not good to make too bold with them. The Bethshemites, for irreverent looking into the ark, were smitten with sudden death. Unworthy communicants are guilty of irreverent looks, touches and actions: some may for this be smitten with sore sickness, and others with death.

Here then we may discover one principal cause of all the judgments GOD brings upon the professors of the true religion; though, alas! it is little laid to heart. Why hath the sword been raging, and the pestilence devouring, even in Protestant nations? And why hath there been so great sickness and mortality, and many sudden deaths among ourselves? May we not

without any breach of charity conclude, that one great cause is, in many, the irreverent use of the sacrament; and in others, the great contempt of that holy ordinance?

2 With *spiritual judgments*. Blindness of mind, hardness of heart, deadness of spirit, spiritual stupidity, &c. These are the judgments GOD doth more usually inflict on unworthy communicants; and they are the most dreadful judgments on this side of hell, and more suited to the New Testament dispensation. Alas! many go from a communion table greater slaves to the devil and their lusts, than formerly. Judas, the first unworthy receiver of the sacrament, if he did receive it at all, was given up as a possession to the Devil, who stirred him up to that base treachery of betraying his Master. As Satan entered into him when he received the sop: so not only one Devil, but seven more, do often enter into such as receive the sacrament unworthily; whereby they return from it more proud, more filthy, more hard-hearted; yea, seven fold more children of the Devil, than they were before. GOD gives them up to *their own hearts lusts*, Psal. lxxxi. 12. Yea, even believers in Christ may, for unworthy partaking, be given up to their own hearts lusts in part, and for a time. Some serious Christians complain of desertion: this may be a fruit of unworthy communicating. For this cause some are under deadness, and others under great darkness of spirit: and for this the influences of the spirit are withholden.

3. With *eternal damnation*. Eating and drinking unworthily makes people liable and obnoxious to this; and if such do not repent and flee to Christ, their eternal damnation is inevitable.

But how is it to be understood, that *such as partake of the sacrament unworthily, eat and drink damnation or judgment*: the meaning is, by their eating and drinking unworthily, they render themselves liable and obnoxious to it: or by so eating and drinking, they have done that which will be the cause of their damnation, if they do not repent. Judgment or damnation is not the end of the ordinance: it was appointed for holy and profitable ends and uses, and is in itself a soul-nourishing and refreshing ordinance. But the abuse of the ordinance, and the evil disposition of the partaker, makes that bring death which was ordained to life, and turns that into poison which was or-

ained for food; as the foulness of the stomach makes whole-
some food turn into noxious humours in the body. Hence it is
said, he *eats and drinks damnation to himself*. The fault is wholly
in himself, not in the ordinance. As the manna was intended
for a blessing; yet when they used it not according to the com-
mand of G O D, it *stank and bred worms*, Exod. xvi. 20. And
the water of jealousy did good to the woman if she was
clean; but if she was defiled, it made her belly swell, and her
high rot: so the sacrament works according to the disposition
of them that receive it. It is bread to strengthen, and wine to
refresh the worthy receiver; but it is poison to the unworthy,
because of his evil disposition.

Fourthly, I go on to clear and prove the doctrine; to wit,
that *the consideration of the great sin and danger of unworthy par-
taking of the sacrament should be improven, to awaken and quicken
to suitable preparation, that we may come worthily*.

Something is here supposed, and something expressed.

I suppose here that *preparation is necessary in order to your
worthy partaking*, and that you may avoid the great sin and
danger of eating and drinking unworthily. This is clear from
text: for the apostle here directs to preparation, for pre-
venting the sin of unworthy receiving and the danger ensuing:
therefore, after he had spoken of the sin, verse 27. he adds, *But
a man examine himself, &c.* And then in v. 29. he presses
it by an argument from the danger. Then,

1. If you do not prepare and examine yourselves, you will eat
and drink unworthily, and so be guilty of the body and blood of
the Lord, and eat and drink damnation to yourselves. *Let a
man examine himself, and so let him eat, &c.* If you do not come
to the table, you eat and drink unworthily. This form of expression bars
men from coming without preparation. Indeed, none of GOD's
ordinances are to be rushed upon without preparation. Under
the Old Testament they prepared for sacrifice. *I will wash mine
hands in innocency; so will I compass thine Altar, O L O R D,*
Psalm xxvi. 6. *Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.*
1 Cor. xvi. 5. How much more ought we to prepare for this
ordinance, wherein we have a solemn commemoration of
the greatest sacrifice that ever was, being the substance of all
the sacrifices that were offered before it? Great preparation
was made also for the passover: how much more ought we to
prepare

prepare for the Lord's Supper, which excels the passover both in point of clearness, and in point of efficacy, and in respect of the things signified and represented; Christ's death being here represented as already past and accepted.

2. If you be serious and earnest in preparation-work, then you partake worthily, providing you do not trust to the preparation you have made. When you have made suitable preparation then may you come to this feast with the Master's allowance. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, &c.* When you have prepared yourselves by self-examination, then you are allowed, yea, commanded to come; then come and welcome. Yea, tho' after much seriousness and diligence in preparation-work, you do not find yourselves so prepared as you would, you come lamenting your want of preparation, and looking to him for what you want: in this case Christ will pass by failings, and welcome you to his table, and fill and satisfy your souls with good things.

I suppose then that preparation is necessary in order to your worthy partaking.

That which is expressed in the doctrine is, that *the consideration of the sin and danger of unworthy partaking should be improved to quicken us to preparation.* Many make a wrong use of the danger.

" Shall I be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and
 " and drink damnation to myself? Surely I had better forbear
 " than run such a terrible risk as that is; therefore I am
 " solved not to partake." This, I say, is a wrong use of
 danger. The sin and danger of unworthy communication
 should never be made a ground of forbearance. There is
 such word in all the scripture, nor any thing like it; " Great
 " the sin and danger of unworthy partaking of the sacrament
 " therefore let it alone, and do not partake." But the use
 are to make of the sin and danger, is to awaken and quicken
 your painfulness and diligence in preparation. This is the
 that the apostle in my text directs us to make of it. He gives
 warning of the great sin and danger of unworthy partaking.
 Hereby men are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and
 and drink damnation to themselves. Well then, what shall we
 Shall we forbear the use of the sacrament? No, no; But
man examine himself, and so let him eat and drink.

For clearing this a little further, let these two things be considered.

1. *It is your indispensable duty to partake of the sacrament.* Christ's command binds this upon you: *Do this*, says he, *in remembrance of me.* The command is plain, positive, express, and peremptory; and it is doubled, for both of elements, Christ said, *Do this in remembrance of me.* So that partaking the sacrament is the duty of all who are capable of examining themselves. But it is a qualified duty. All are called to come to the table; but in the orderly way, that is, first to prepare, and then to come. This is clear from the text, where after the command to partake, *Do this in remembrance of me*, follows another command joining preparation, *but let a man examine himself*; i. e. Let every man examine, and so come. But it may be objected, then such as do not prepare are not obliged to come, and consequently their not coming to the sacrament is no sin. I answer, Even such as neglect preparation-work are still under the obligation and tie of the command; for the command is, to *prepare and come*. Your neglecting to prepare cannot loose you from the obligation to come. The command still lies upon your conscience, and you are still bound by it: else prophane sinners by their neglect and omission in one duty, would loose themselves from all obligation to another.

2. *Great is the sin and danger of slighting and neglecting the ordinance.* 1. *The sin is great.* For it is direct disobedience to the plain and peremptory command of our dying Saviour. It is quitting the profession of Christianity and a resiling from your baptismal vow and covenant. It is a great contempt of the ordinance, as if it were a trifling institution, and a disparaging Christ's infinite wisdom, love, and grace, and care of his people, as if he had appointed a frivolous ordinance. You do thereby greatly wrong your own souls, by denying them their necessary food. He that comes unworthily, poisons his soul; and he that slightes and neglects the ordinance, is guilty of starving it. He that, such are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; especially prophane sinners, who neglect the sacrament out of love to their sins. They pour contempt on Christ's body and blood, and all the sweet fruits of his purchase dispensed in the sacrament to worthy receivers. They do no less than trample his

his body and blood under their feet. 2 *The danger is also great.* This follows on the former. If the sin be great, the judgment it exposeth to must be proportionably great. Such as refused to come to the marriage-feast of the king's son were destroyed, as well as he that came without a wedding garment. The careless neglect of this holy ordinance will bring heavy wrath upon the impenitent: their damnation is inevitable; and their hell will be very hot.

Well then, we see that there is great sin and danger on both hands. Therefore, when you think of the sin and danger of eating and drinking unworthily, that should never be made a ground of forbearance, but improved to quicken you to preparation; because, by forbearing, you run into as great sin and danger as that which you labour to avoid. The truth is, I cannot tell you on what hand the sin and danger is greatest; therefore, it is only safe for you to prepare and come, in obedience to Christ's command. You should reason with yourselves thus, "Christ hath commanded me to do this in remembrance of him, and there is great sin and danger in forbearing: therefore, in obedience to his command, I will venture, and this I will do. But I see that there is also great sin and danger in eating and drinking unworthily: therefore I will set seriously to work, and examine and prepare, as the Lord will help that I may partake worthily." This is the right way; and GOD useth to make this way to prosper with people. Dear Christians, labour to bring your consciences under the awe and authority of Christ's command, and do not mar your frame by groundless scruples: for the more you give way to affected scruples, Satan hath the greater advantage against you, and your doubts and scruples will grow the more upon your hands.

Fifthly, I come in the last place to shew, what preparation is required to your worthy partaking of the sacrament, that so you may not contract so great a guilt, nor incur such danger.

There is a twofold preparation required, *habitual and actual.*

1 *Habitual preparation.* This respects our state, and belongs to such of you as are yet in an unrenewed and unregenerated state, and please yourselves with a dead and lifeless profession of Christianity.

Christianity. I shall therefore press this habitual preparation upon such persons, under these few heads.

(1.) *Get knowledge to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament.* Too many, alas! are grossly ignorant; so a competent measure of knowledge is necessary to your discerning the Lord's body, without which you cannot partake worthily. In order to this, I give you a brief sum of what is necessary for you to know, in these few articles. 1. GOD made man at first in an holy and happy state, from which he soon fell by his rebellion against GOD; and we all having sinned in him are thereby brought into a most sinful and miserable state, being born in sin, and children of wrath by sin. 2. GOD having, out of his mere good pleasure from all eternity, chosen some to eternal life, did, according to his eternal council, send *his only begotten Son*, the second person of the Holy Trinity, into the world; who, having assumed our nature into the unity of his person, did, in that nature, in the room and place of all the elect, perform a perfect obedience to the Father in his life, and suffer all sorts of sinless miseries, and death and wrath, for their sins: and the divine nature contributing an infinite worth and value to the obedience and sufferings of the humane nature in his person, he did thereby make full satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, and purchased for them all spiritual and eternal blessings. 3. In the gospel, or the covenant of grace, Christ, with all his purchased benefits, is freely offered unto sinners, and great assurance given that he, with his whole purchase, shall be their's, upon their receiving Christ in all his mediatory offices, and closing with him by faith; the Holy Spirit being promised to all the elect to work that faith in them. 4. The sacrament was instituted by Christ to represent to believers in the breaking of his body and the shedding of his blood, whereby he satisfied justice for their sins, and purchased all needful blessings for them; to confirm to them their right to him and his sacrifice, and the blessings purchased thereby; and to convey to them his body and blood spiritually for their spiritual nourishment; the body and blood of Christ being as really, tho' spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to the outward senses. The knowledge of all this in some measure is necessary, as that,

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without

without which you cannot discern Christ's body in the sacrament, and so cannot partake worthily : therefore be at pains to attain this knowledge.

(2.) *Get a deep sense of your sad and dreadful state.* For the end, think upon your ways. Consider what your way and manner of life hath been. Consider your particular sins of heart and life, of omission and commission. Look back upon your lives, and look into your hearts, and pry into every corner of them. And let the sight and sense of your particular transgressions lead you to a sight and sense of the original corruption of your nature. Think on the great evil of sin, and your misery by it. Consider what dreadful wrath your sin expose you unto. Ye are lying under the curse, and there is nothing between you and eternal flames but the slender thread of a frail life.

(3.) *Seek after the renovation and sanctification of your nature.* While you are not renewed by grace, your nature is filthy and polluted, and your duties contract a defilement from your persons; *for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? none,* Job xiv. 4. So that your best duties and services are loathsome and abominable to GOD, and you can have no communion with him in them. Again, till you are renewed and sanctified, you have no grace in you, no faith to feed on a crucified Christ, no gracious appetite for the bread of life, no love to Christ, no godly sorrow for sin, &c. Well, then, seek from GOD a new heart and a new spirit. O! be earnest for the sanctifying power of the spirit to cleanse and purge your filthy natures and to adorn them with saving graces : and wait on GOD for this in all the ways and means of his appointment.

(4.) *Renounce and abandon all your sins.* Under the Old Testament, the poor captive woman, that was to be married to a man of any of the tribes of Israel, was to put off the raiment of her captivity. How much more should you put off the old man and your sinful deeds, when you are to solemnize a marriage with the eternal Son of GOD. O take heed coming to GOD's holy table in your filthiness. While ye are unclean, all things are unclean unto you. Therefore cleanse away your filthiness; *wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before the eyes of the LORD,* Isa. i. 16.

and when you are to draw nigh to GOD, cleanse your hands ye
ners, and purify your hearts ye double-minded, James iv. 8.

with Ephraim, what have I to do any more with idols, Hos.

8 And come to the sacrament with that firm resolution,

I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Job xxxiv. 32.

5.) See to it that you receive Christ, and close with him by faith :

do this speedily without delay; for the justice of GOD,

the avenger of blood, is pursuing you hard at the heels,

dy to overtake you every moment; and there is no refuge

in Christ. You have lost and destroyed yourselves by sin,

Christ is the only Saviour for a lost sinner to flee to:

there is no salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. There can be no

conscious communion between GOD and you, but in and thro'

Christ. Till you get Christ himself, you cannot share of his

benefits. Your best and most solemn duties are an abomina-

tion, till you be in Christ, and reconciled to GOD thro' him.

Therefore, under the deep sense of your sin and misery, flee to

Christ, and close with him upon his own terms. Look to it

that you receive a whole Christ in all his mediatory offices, be-

heartily willing and content to serve him, as well as to be

led by him, and to be saved from sin, as well as from wrath.

Take Christ and his yoke. Christ and his cross, as well as Christ

his crown: and resolve with all the inconveniencies that

possibly follow upon your closing with him. And see that

you take him freely, under the deep sense of your utter unwor-

thiness; and take him only, to be your only Saviour and Re-

deemer, renouncing your own righteousness, and all ground of

confidence in yourselves.

6.) Complete all this by joining yourselves to GOD in covenant.

1. 4, 5. Till you be in covenant with GOD, what have you

to do with the seal of the covenant, or with the blessings of the

covenant that are dispensed in that great ordinance? Consider

that damnable hypocrisy and mocking of GOD it is, to profess

that covenant with GOD, if you do not really and sincerely

covenant. And as you are bond slaves to sin, so, if you do not

covenant with GOD, your communicating will make your bonds

stronger, and render your covenanting with GOD more dif-

icult than ever it was before. Yet I would not be so under-

stood here, as if I did make believing in Christ, and covenanting

with GOD quite different things ; for they are upon the matter one and the same. When you receive Christ by faith, then you covenant with GOD ; for the heart's closing with an offer of Christ is the very soul and essence of covenanting : yet, when you have closed with Christ, it is very expedient to be express and explicite in covenanting. But O ! see that you be sincere in this matter, and do not please yourselves with a formal or customary way of covenanting with GOD : be concerning to have your hearts right with GOD in covenanting. Consider what a difficult thing it is to covenant with him aright. Thousands miscarry here ; and unsound covenanting proves a sad snare to them : it is a soft pillow on which many professors of religion sleep securely into hell. Therefore, set about this work of covenanting with GOD, with much holy fear and trembling, lest you mar the matter, and make it worse with yourselves. And let that you consent heartily to all the terms of the covenant. Look to it that there be no secret reserve in your engagements to GOD, no sin that you are unwilling to part with, and no duty that your hearts cannot comply with. And, see to it, that in covenanting with GOD, you make use of Christ the blessed surety of the covenant. Lay all the weight and stress of your performing the duties of the covenant upon his mediation ; and let all your hope of holding by the bargain be built on him.

2. Actual preparation is also required. This respects our frame and disposition, and belongs to such as are the children of GOD. Tho' you are renewed by grace, and have sincerely, may be many years ago, closed with Christ, and covenanted with GOD through him ; yet, you need to prepare so often as you are to partake of the sacrament : because much of your natural disposition for duty easily recurs again ; there may be much deadness and dulness, so that grace needs to be excited and quickened : and tho' you may be disposed in some measure to ordinary duties ; yet an ordinary good disposition will not serve for such an extraordinary duty as this you are now called to.

But *what preparation ought to be made by believers in Christ* I here recommend these pieces of actual preparation.

(1) *Examine yourselves.* This is so necessary, that under the apostle comprehends the whole of our preparation for the sacrament ; and indeed no preparatory duty can be rightly performed

formed, if this be neglected. Therefore, 1. Examine your state ;
 ye be in Christ, and reconciled to GOD through him. Labour
 to attain to some clearness that it is indeed so. This is ne-
 cessary, that you may come to the sacrament with holy confi-
 dence, comfort, and hope of success. 2. Examine your sins.
 Labour by self examination to find out the number of your sins,
 so far as possibly you can ; and consider especially what sins you
 have been most guilty of since you was last at the Lord's table.
 Labour also by self examination to find out the measure of your
 sins. Ponder the several aggravations of them, as being com-
 mitted against light, against mercy, against solemn vows and co-
 venant engagements, and against special warnings and rebukes
 from the word and providences of GOD. 3. Examine your
 graces. And, (1) Examine the truth of grace. Labour to be
 clear about this, that you have the grace of GOD in truth, know-
 ledge to discern the Lord's body in the sacrament, faith to feed
 on him, love to him, godly sorrow for sin that pierced him, and
 gracious appetite for the good cheer at this great feast.
 (2) Examine the condition wherein your graces are, the vigour
 or languor of them in your soul. Consider what are the wants
 of your graces, how much is wanting to your faith, love, &c. Call
 out all your graces one by one, and observe what these graces are
 wherein you are most defective, that you may come to Christ in
 that great ordinance for strength and nourishment to them.
 (2) Renew your repentance. When you have discovered what
 your sins are, renew your deep humiliation and godly sorrow for
 them, that these sins may not obstruct your communion with
 GOD in that solemn duty. There ought to be a special purga-
 tion before worship. *I will wash mine hands in innocency*, says
 the Psalmist, *so will I compass thine Altar, O LORD*, Psal xxvi.
 The holy mourner will be feasted at the sacrament, *Blessed*
are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted, Mat. v. 6. Our
 Christian passover must be eaten with bitter herbs. It is meet
 that your heart be set a mourning for sin, when you come to
 look on a crucified Christ represented to you in the sacrament, see-
 ing your sins were as the nails and spear that pierced him. A
 broken Christ, and an unbroken heart will not suit.
 (3.) Renew your covenant with GOD. Though you have for-
 merly covenanted sincerely and honestly ; yet, alas ! is not your
 covenant

covenant with GOD much forgotten? Is not the lively sense of your covenant-engagements much worn off your hearts? Have not frequent breaches of the covenant much awakened the sensible tie and obligation thereof upon your own hearts? Now, the renewing of your covenant will be a good mean to revive this obligation. It is like casting the other knot between GOD and your soul, when former knots are, in your apprehension, like to be loosed. Therefore set about the renewing of the covenant between GOD and you. And in so doing have a special eye to these sins you have most frequently committed, and these duties you have most neglected, since the last time you covenanted with GOD: and in renewing covenant, resolve, through grace, upon more care to keep covenant. If you are not resolved to take more pains, to be more watchful against sin, and more diligent in duty; if you are not resolved to be more holy, more spiritual, more lively, and more tender; to what purpose do ye renew your covenant?

(4.) *Excite and stir up the grace of GOD in you*, especially your sacramental graces. There may be a great restraint upon your graces, so that they do not flow out in exercise. Grace may be much quenched by sin, or deadened by too much converse with the world. Therefore stir up the grace of GOD that is in you. It is necessary, in order to your worthy partaking, that grace be in exercise: for in the sacrament Christ comes to feast with you, as well as you with him; but if grace be not in exercise, you have nothing ready for his entertainment, nothing to feast, delight, and satisfy him. Again, all acts of communion between Christ and us are mutual. As there are influences and communications of grace on his part, so there must be grace in exercise on your part; your spikenard must send forth the smell thereof. I cannot say that it is necessary to your worthy partaking that grace be in a lively exercise; because serious Christians may warrantably come to the sacrament under much spiritual deadness, providing they be sensible of it, and lament and bewail it, and make it their errand to Christ in that ordinance to get life and quickening. But it is necessary, in order to your worthy partaking, that you earnestly endeavour to have grace lively. You must do what you can to shake of your drowsy dullness, and to stir up your lazy hearts. Chide your own hearts for

for their dulness and laziness: call in all that is within you to do
 your proper work: use quickening and rousing meditations: cry
 for the quickening influences of the spirit of grace; and see that
 you cherish his motions and breathings.

S E R M O N III.

Before the L O R D's S U P P E R.

Beholding CHRIST as the LAMB of GOD taking
 away Sin.

JOHN i. 29.

Behold the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the Sin of the World.

THE great work of this solemnity is rightly to behold
 Christ the Lamb of GOD; and if we can get but one right
 look of him, we are happy for ever. John the Baptist was sent
 before as Christ's fore-runner, and did accordingly give testimo-
 ny of him very faithfully: but amongst all the testimonies ever
 John gave of Christ, none is more full and clear than this in my
 text.

Christ having returned from his temptations in the wilderness,
 comes and honours John's ministry with his presence. John
 seeing him, gives him a noble testimony, and calls his hearers to
 behold him. John did point him out personally, as being come
 in the flesh; but we point him out to you in the gospel, and
 specially in his supper, wherein he is clearly represented as the
 Lamb of GOD offered in sacrifice for our sins; and as John cal-
 led his hearers, so do we call you, *Behold the Lamb of GOD,*
which taketh away the sin of the world.

In these words we have, 1. *The designation given to Christ,*
the Lamb of GOD, or [that] Lamb of GOD. The great
anti-

anti-type and substance of all the lambs offered in sacrifice under the law, and especially of the Paschal Lambs; they were but types and shadows of him: so that hereby John labours to draw the minds of the Jews off from these shadows to the substance. 2 *Christ's work and office*; He *taketh away the sin of the world*. By the world here, we are not to understand every man and woman in the world; for it is plain that Christ doth not take away their sins. But this term the world is here used indefinitely, to denote a considerable number of all nations, ages, and ranks of men: and this is agreeable to the common and natural signification of this phrase, which in ordinary speech, doth not necessarily import every one of mankind, but is of a much narrower signification. True it is, they are a particular definite number whose sins are taken away by Christ; yet, they are here expressed indefinitely by this term the world. (1) To shew the difference between *the Lamb of GOD* and the sacrifices under the law: they were offered only for the Israelites; but *the Lamb of GOD* was offered for people of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews. (2.) To correct the narrow and uncharitable thoughts of the Jews, who imagined that none should reap benefit by the Messiah but the children of Israel. No, says John, ye are greatly mistaken, he is a Saviour for other nations of the world as well as for the Jews. Hence the apostle John says, *he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. Now, Christ's work and office is to take away the sin of the world: sin, in the singular number, that is, all sins; he takes them away at one stroke, by one offering. The word in the original signifies to bear sin, and to bear it so as to bear it away; so did Christ, by bearing our sins, he takes them away from us. It may be an allusion to the Scape Goat, Lev. xvi. 22. This Christ did as a sacrificed Lamb as a sacrifice offered to GOD in our stead. 3. We have the duty required with respect to him, *Behold the Lamb of GOD*. It points him out as it were with the finger. This is *the desire of all nations*; this is he whom we have long looked for; this is the great sacrifice, the consolation of Israel, the great mercy promised to our fathers. Set your eyes on him; observe and consider him well; and let your eye affect your heart.

This text being full of matter, I can but glance at things

very great moment, and therefore require your more earnest attention.

There are three doctrines that are obvious to us in these words; as, 1. *Christ is the true Lamb of GOD.* 2. *Christ as the Lamb of GOD takes away the sins of his people.* 3. *'Tis the duty and great concernment of all to behold him.*

Obser. 1. *Christ is the true Lamb of GOD.*

He is here, 1. *Represented under the notion of a Lamb.* And, *Called the Lamb of GOD.*

First, *He is represented under the notion of a Lamb.* He is so called here, and v. 36. and frequently in the book of the Revelation. He is called a Lamb, in allusion to the lambs offered in sacrifice under the Old Testament. Diverse other beasts were offered in sacrifice: But John chooses rather to allude to the lambs that were offered. 1. Because a lamb is an emblem of innocence and meekness: So Christ was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*, and the great pattern of meekness and patience in suffering, never to be paralleled, Heb. vii. 6. *For, he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth*, Isa. liii. 7. With a special reference to the daily sacrifice, and to the Paschal Lamb.

1. With a reference to the daily sacrifice. Lambs were often offered in sacrifice; but the use of them in the daily sacrifice was most frequent and constant, being offered morning and evening continually, Exod. xxix. 28. So Christ the true Lamb is our everlasting propitiation, whose blood speaks continually. He is our daily Lamb, to be presented by us to GOD every morning and evening continually, as the only means of our atonement; and we must daily make use of his sacrifice. Again, as the lambs offered in the daily sacrifice were doubled on the Sabbath-day; so, on the Lord's-day, there ought to be a more solemn remembrance of Christ, as our Lamb sacrificed for us.

2. With a most special reference to the Paschal Lamb: for it was the most solemn figure and type of Christ under the Old Testament, and did most fully express both the design of his office, and the nature of his sufferings. Hence he is called, *Passover sacrificed for us*, 1 Cor. v. 7. This especially is

the type to which John alludes in my text. I cannot insist on the resemblance between Christ and the Paschal Lamb: I only mention these three things. 1. The Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ in his death: as it was slain, so was he: as the blood of it was shed, so was his blood for our sins: as it was roasted with fire, so was he roasted in the fire of GOD's wrath, which had the bitterness of a thousand deaths. Hence the Psalmist as a type of Christ, cries out, *My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a parched sheaf; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws*, Psal. xxii. 14, 15. O the scorching sufferings of our dear Redeemer, when he stood in our room and place! 2. The children of Israel were to sprinkle the lintel and two side posts of their doors with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and that secured them from the destroying angel, who slew the first born of the Egyptians: So must our hearts be sprinkled with the blood of Christ; and that secures us from the sin-revenging wrath and justice of GOD; *being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*, Rom v, 9. 'Tis only under the covert of this blood that we can be safe from a storm and tempest of divine wrath. 3. The children of Israel were to eat the lamb in a holy and religious manner: so must we eat the flesh of the Lamb of GOD spiritually by faith; *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, says our Saviour, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*, John vi. 53. The Lamb of GOD that was given as a ransom to divine justice, is also given as food for our souls. The Paschal Lamb was both a sacrifice and a feast: so Christ gave himself a sacrifice to divine justice for our sins; and this sacrifice, in regard of the blessed fruits of it, is returned to us as a banquet. Hence the apostle says, *Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast*. 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. And as they were to eat the whole lamb, nothing being to be left; so must we do with and make use of a whole Christ: There is nothing in him to be refused.

Secondly, Christ is here called, *the Lamb* [of GOD.] The lambs being GOD's creatures, might therefore be called Holy; and the lambs appointed for sacrifice, as also the Paschal Lamb

ere His in a special manner, being set apart for these uses by His special appointment. But 'tis Christ's prerogative that he [the] Lamb of GOD, or [that] Lamb of GOD; and he may be so called. 1. By way of demonstration, [that Lamb] that was spoken of by the prophets; this is he. 2. By way of dignity, to put a difference between him and all the typical lambs. [that Lamb of GOD, as being (1) designed and set apart by GOD in his eternal counsel for the glorious work of redemption, being fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, 1 Pet. 20. (2) Separated by GOD from sinners by spotless sanctification, to be a perfect sacrifice. *The power of the Highest overshadowing his mother; that which she conceived was an holy thing, Luke i 35.* (3) Sent by GOD into the world with commission and instructions to accomplish the work of redemption. *I came down from heaven, says he, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me, John vi. 38.* (4) Prepared, fitted and furnished by GOD for the work, Heb. x. 5. GOD prepared him a body and a soul, and filled him with the spirit above measure, John iii 34. (5) Accepted by GOD, who smelled a sweet savour from his sacrifice, Eph. v. 2. He is that Lamb of GOD; the only lamb and sacrifice accepted for itself; other lambs being accepted, only as they were types and representations of this.

Use 1. See here the *greatness of Christ's sufferings*, and his admirable love therein. He was so used as the Paschal Lamb was, roasted, and wholly roasted, in the fire of GOD's wrath, for our iniquities. How wonderful is it, that he should be content to leave his Father's bosom, that he might suffer the most exquisite pains and torments both in soul and body, and that for such vile worms as we are! *O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth the knowledge of all created beings!* Eph. iii. 18, 19.

Use 2. See here the *necessity of faith in Christ*. Though the blood of the Paschal Lamb was shed; yet, that did not secure the Israelites from the destroying angel, unless they had sprinkled it on the lintel and two side posts of their doors: so neither can Christ's blood shed on the cross secure us from the wrath and justice of GOD, unless it is sprinkled on our souls. Hence

we read of *the sprinkling of the blood of JESUS*, 1 Pet. i 3 and it is sprinkled on our part only by faith, called therefore *faith in his blood*, Romans iii 25. The wrath of GOD will unavoidably come on all those who are not sprinkled with his blood.

Use 3. Try if he be *your lamb*. He is *the Lamb of GOD*; but he must be your's too by your choice and acceptance of him, else you can expect no benefit by him. But how shall we know if he be ours? If he be your's, you will study to be like him, and learn of him to be meek and lowly as he is. *Come to me*, says he, *and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Mat. xi. 28, 29. Again, have ye ever, under a deep sense of sin and apprehension of deserved wrath, fled to him, and closed with him, as the only expiatory sacrifice for sin? And had you ever such a discovery of his incomparable excellency, as raised him high in your esteem, above all that can be dear and precious to you; so that you count all things but loss and dung for him? Try yourselves by these things.

Use 4. Here is *ground of comfort to believers*, to you who have fled to Christ, and received him by faith. Being sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of GOD, you are in a secure and safe state, and may bid defiance to any to bring a condemning charge against you. The malice of the Devil can have no power over you; the justice of GOD no plea against you. True it is, your deliverance is not yet perfected. As Pharaoh pursued the *children of Israel*, after they had escaped from their bondage in Egypt; so, after your deliverance from your natural bondage, Satan may pursue you; but he shall not overtake you, so as to bring you back to your old bondage again: Nor shall the red sea of death swallow up those that are sprinkled with the blood of this Lamb.

Use 5. As the *children of Israel* did eat the Paschal Lamb, so I invite you to *come and feed on the slain Lamb of GOD*. Here I shall speak a little. 1. Of *sacramental eating*. 2. Of *spiritual eating*.

1. Of *sacramental eating*. As the *children of Israel* did eat the Paschal Lamb, and so celebrate that ordinance; so ought Christians to eat and drink at the Lord's table: For as that was the Old Testament communion, so is this the New Testament pas-

lover;

er; and the command to partake is no less exprefs for the one
 an it was for the other: *Do this*, fays Christ, *in remembrance*
me. Consider, 1. Whose command this is: 'Tis his com-
 and whom you profess to be your Lord and Saviour. 2. When
 gave this command: *In the night wherein he was betrayed*,
 en he was drawing near to death; therefore it is the more to
 regarded. Especially considering, 3. That it is a command
 much for your own good. O! there is much good to be
 ten at the sacrament, if you come in a worthy man-

But some may say, "Gladly would we come to the Lord's
 table to-day, but we are not prepared." This leads me to
 ak a word to two sorts among you. 1. Is there any poor
 fible sinner here that hath wholly neglected preparation-work,
 laments and regrates it? To such an one, I say, that want
 preparation may in some respect be made up now, if you will
 e GOD's counsel; therefore I make a free offer of Christ to
 : If you will now renounce all iniquity with grief and shame,
 quite confidence in any righteousness of your own, and ac-
 of a whole Christ freely in all his offices, and make a so-
 n, entire and hearty resignation of yourselves to him, to be
 olly and for ever his: I say, if now, through grace you do so;
 ow you consent heartily to these gracious terms, then it is a
 gain between him and you, and he and all his purchased be-
 ts are your's; and I do, in the name of my *Great Lord and*
father, invite you to come to his table. Come and seal the
 gain; come and get infestment in all the new covenant-blef-
 s: But come humbled for your neglect of preparation, and
 for mercy, and flee to the blood of Christ; and the *good*
and pardon every one that thus prepared his heart to seek GOD,
he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary,
 Chron. xxx. 18, 19. 2. Are there any serious Christians
 , who have been diligent thro' grace in preparation-work,
 yet after all lament that they are very much unprepared,
 know not what to do? To such, I say, that sense of want
 preparation, after diligence and seriousness in preparatory du-
 should not hinder you from coming to the Lord's table, if
 are duly affected with the sense of what you want; yea
 e, after much diligence and seriousness in preparation-work,
 the

the more true humbling sense you have of your own unfitted unworthiness, and want of preparation, it is the better, and you are the more welcome to Christ's table. But come deeply affected with the sense of your wants, and come on this design to get your wants supplied. But I go on to speak a little.

2. Of *spiritual eating*. Seeing the Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ our true passover, both as a sacrifice and as a feast; therefore, as the children of Israel were to eat the lamb, so they were to feed on Christ in that ordinance: and doubtless this was the work and exercise of believers among them. So, in the Lord's Supper, we are to feed by faith on Christ the Lamb of GOD who was slain. This duty is plainly implied in the words of institution; *Take, eat, this is my body: this cup is the New Testament in my blood, drink ye all of it. Take, eat and drink*, that is, take Christ, and feed on him. There is an express command to feed on the elements of bread and wine, and an implied command to feed on Christ.

Well then, I invite you to come and feed on the Lamb of GOD in this great ordinance. Need I tell you of the excellency of the food? *My flesh is meat indeed*, says Christ, *and my blood drink indeed*. John vi. 55. All bodily refreshments are but weak and empty in comparison of the Lamb of GOD, and afford but shadows of that sweetness and refreshment, strength and life that he communicates to poor hungry souls; and serious Christians need not doubt of welcome. If you lament your natural enmity against GOD, and lay down the weapons of your rebellion against him, by renouncing all iniquity, and embrace the offers of peace thro' Christ: then grace hath made you friends, and the sacrament is a feast for friends; and the Master calls you, and will welcome you, and give you kind entertainment.

O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved, Cant. v. 1.

Therefore, 1. *Get a deep sense of your spiritual necessities and wants*. Ponder seriously what deadness and dulness of heart, what spiritual leanness and barrenness; what sad decays of graces; and how much is lacking to your faith, love, and other graces; labour to come with the deep sense of all this upon your heart. 2. *Come with believing apprehensions of the fulness of Christ*. There is all that in him, and to be had from him, that you may do your turn abundantly: He is soul reviving, soul-strengthening.

g, soul-restoring, and soul-refreshing food. 3. Cry for a long appetite, enlarged desires after this bread of life: for *he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness,* al. cvii. 9. 4. *Rouse up your faith:* for it is by faith you must feed on the *Lamb of GOD.* Say with that man, *Lord, I believe,* *thou mine unbelief,* Mar. ix 24. Be earnest with *GOD* to teach you that practical mystery of feeding by faith on the sacrificed *Lamb of GOD.* 5. Eat the *Lamb of GOD* as the children of *Israel* did eat the Paschal Lamb.

And here I recommend these things.

1. Eat your Christian passover with *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,* 1 Cor. v. 8. The great King and Master of this feast looks into the heart, and neither can nor will be put off with fair outward appearances and shews of devotion. Hypocrisy is hateful and loathsome to him: but he takes great pleasure in them that come in truth and sincerity. *Such as are right in their way are his delight,* Prov. xi. 20. And he will surely manifest it.

Eat it with bitter herbs, bitter sorrow and grief of heart for sin. If ye love him, shew it by mourning bitterly for sin that crucified him. Bitterness of soul for sin will make you relish the sweetness of Christ in this ordinance. Come with melting and feeding hearts.

3. I recommend that text in *Exod. xii. 11.* where the Lord gives direction to the children of *Israel* how to eat their first passover; *thus shall ye eat it,* says he, *with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat in haste; it is the Lord's passover.* Whence it is evident, that they were to eat their first passover in the gesture and habit of pilgrims, being presently after it to enter upon their journey toward Canaan. And that journey being a figure of the believer's journey and pilgrimage toward heaven; doubtless it was the will of *GOD* that his people, in eating the passover, should remember that they were but pilgrims and strangers in the earth, and that they should labour for such a frame and disposition as might suit their state and condition: so do ye. *Dear Christians,* remember that ye are pilgrims and strangers in the earth, journeying toward the heavenly Canaan; and your journey and pilgrimage may be near to an end; death may be at hand.

Therefore,

Therefore, as the *children of Israel*, in eating the first passover were in a readiness for present journey; so, in partaking of the sacrament, study to be in a readiness to take your leave of your earthly comforts and enjoyments and to pass through the Jordan of death into Emmanuel's land. Labour to go about the work of this day, as if death were just at your back.

Particularly, Eat your Christian passover. 1. *With your loins girded.* Gird up the loins of your mind, 1 Pet. i. 13. Observe what these things are that are apt to distract, disquiet, and discompose your minds; and watch, and strive, and cry to GOD against them. Gird up your loins, and buckle to your work. Cry to GOD to gird the strength of your soul together: *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, says the Psalmist. Psal. lxxxvi. 11. Unite my heart to act faith, and love, and other graces. 2. *Eat it with your shoes on your feet, having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* Eph. vi. 15. Come to the sacrament with a holy preparedness and readiness to run Christ's errands with a readiness to do and suffer whatever you may be called to. 3. *Eat it with your staff in your hand:* leaning on Christ in his promises, that you may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. Take this staff in your hand, and lean on it. Lean on him for grace to help you in the great work of this day; and lean on him for grace and strength to enable you to do and suffer for him. 4. *Eat your Christian passover with haste.* As the *children of Israel* were to hasten toward Canaan, so should ye hasten toward your heavenly Canaan. Dear Christians, Let it be your work and business, on this solemn occasion to make haste home. It should be the joy of your heart to think of being at home with Christ: therefore mind your face heavenward; grow fast in grace and holiness. Make it your business in the use of this great ordinance, to make some considerable advances in your pilgrimage toward heaven. Labour to get some advantage over corruption, and to have grace increased and strengthened, that it may be still ripening toward glory.

Obser. 2. *Christ, as the Lamb of GOD, takes away the sin of his people.*

He takes away sin as a sacrificed Lamb: For the allusion in the text is not to the Lamb as a creature, but to the Lamb as a sacrifice.

office. This was the great end of Christ's incarnation, death and sufferings: *To finish transgression, to make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity*, Dan. ix. 24. *He appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26. This is a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, known and acknowledged by all the Christians. *And ye know*, says the apostle, *that he was manifested to take away our sins*, 1 John iii. 5.

Christ the Lamb of GOD takes away sin, by bearing it in his person. As I said, the word in my text signifies both to bear sin, and so to bear it as to bear it away: so did Christ, 1. *He bore our sins*. *He bore them in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. Having substitute himself in our room and place, *The LORD laid on him the iniquities of us all*; Isa. liii. 6, 12. and he took them on himself; so that he suffered the punishment due to them, the same punishment that we deserved. Hence he is said to be *made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. and to have *bore our griefs*, and *carried our sorrows*, Isa. liii. 4. 2. He hereby *took them away* from us.

To clear this, consider that *Christ's taking away sin* is either in the meritorious or applicative.

Meritorious. Thus, he took away sin on the cross, by the sacrifice of himself. For, 1. He did thereby make atonement for sin, and expiated the guilt of it, that it might never be imputed to his people: *By himself he purged our sins*, Heb. i. 3. Hence he is called, *the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 2. Therefore our blessed Lord gave commission to his apostles to preach the forgiveness of sin as the fruit of his death, Luke xxiv. We have the *forgiveness of sins through his blood*, Eph. i. 2. By his sacrifice he purchased the *Holy Spirit* to free his people from the power and pollution of sin. Hence 'tis said, *that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*. Rom. vi. 6. *that he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, Tit. ii. 14. And that *he bare our sins on his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. He purchased grace to subdue our love to and desire for sin, and to turn our hearts from sin to GOD. Thus he took away sin by the sacrifice of himself: And this he did once for all, so that there needs no repetition of his

sacrifice and offering ; for *by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, Heb. x. 14.

2. There is a taking away sin by Christ, which is applicative at and after the sinners closing with him by faith : and so his work in taking away sin is not done all at once, but by degrees. The word in my text denotes a continued act ; the *Lamb of GOD, that is, taking away sin*. 'Tis a thing he is always a-doing. He is every day taking away sin. This is his constant and continual employment and business ; and it will never be completed till time shall be no more : and he is employed herein, by his continual intercession in heaven, and by the constant influence of his spirit and grace on earth.

Particularly, 1. As to the guilt of sin. Christ takes that way, when the poor sinner, upon his closing with him and laying hold on his sacrifice, is absolved from eternal wrath and condemnation : for *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ*, Rom. viii. 1. And to him give all the prophets witness, that, *whoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sin*, Acts x. 43. Christ the surety having paid the debt, the believing sinner must be discharged, seeing it is not consistent with divine justice to exact the same debt twice. Hence a challenge is made to all the believer's adversaries to bring an effectual charge against him. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of GOD's elect ? It is GOD that justifieth ; who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, &c.* Rom. viii. 33. This is perfect at first ; but on the great day it shall be manifested and declared by a public and final sentence. Hence the day is on this account called *the time of refreshing*, Acts iii. 21.

2. As to the power and pollution of sin, Christ takes that away when at first conversion by the power of his grace and spirit, he brings down the strong holds of sin in the soul, and cleanses the soul from the deformity of it. Hence it is said, *He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour*, Tit. iii. 5.

6. And his blood is said to *purge the conscience from dead works*, Heb. ix. 14. This he doth not all at once ; but it is a work he is ever a-doing, and carrying on in the hearts of his people toward perfection. Hence the apostle prays for the further sanctification of believers : *And the very GOD of peace, says he, sanctify*

you wholly, 1 Theff. v. 23. 3 As to the being and inherence of sin, Christ takes that away at death. The Canaanite is still in the land, to keep believers in exercise, and to put them upon a constant believing dependence on Christ. But at death it shall be utterly abolished; for in heaven *the spirits of just men are made perfect*, Heb xii. 23. At death the blood of the Lamb shall perfect what it hath begun, and crown the soul with an everlasting victory.

Use 1. Then fall in with Christ's gracious design, by parting with, and putting away all your iniquities. Oh! will ye hold fast sin, when it is Christ's work to take it away? Will ye do that in you lies to make his coming and death in vain and of no effect, and to put your blessed Redeemer to shame? GOD forbid. Seeing he came, and gave himself a sacrifice to GOD, that he might take away sin; see that ye part with your sins. Renounce and abandon all iniquity with grief, shame, and holy indignation. This is nothing else but what your own belief and profession obliges you to: *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. If you live and die in your sins, you will be left without excuse, seeing there is a sufficient remedy provided and offered; and the day is coming when the sight of the *Lamb of GOD* will be most terrible to you, so that you shall call *to the mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16.

Use 2. O sinners come to Christ, and close with him as the *Lamb of GOD*; as the only expiatory sacrifice for sin, that he may take away our sins.

For pressing this, Consider 1. *Ye are lying under sin: for all the world is become guilty before GOD. And all have sinned, and are short of the glory of GOD*. Rom. iii. 19, 23. You are under the guilt of sins both original and actual; Eph. ii. 3. and sin hath brought you under the wrath and curse of GOD, Gal. iii. 10. Consider what a happiness it would be to have sin taken away: for sin is the only spring and cause of all your woe and misery. It is your soul's sickness, the plague of your heart. It is the deformity of your soul, and makes you loathsome to GOD. It is a deadly poison in your bowels. It is a burden too heavy for you to bear, Psal. xxxviii. 4. O what misery is it to have it left

lying on your own shoulders ! if it be, it will sink you down to hell. But it is an inestimable blessing to have sin taken away for then the great bar and obstacle to all other mercies and blessings is removed out of the way, and ye are received into favour with an offended GOD. When sin is taken away, then the partition-wall is broken down, so that you have access to GOD and communion with him : then the curse is removed, and your deliverance from wrath secured : then death is untinged, so that you may sing a triumph over it. 3 *You cannot have sin taken away but by closing with the immaculate Lamb of GOD sacrificed for sin* GOD will not pardon your sin without a satisfaction to his justice : justice cannot be satisfied without a sacrifice : a sacrifice but that of the Lamb of GOD is sufficient ; and you can have no benefit by his sacrifice without faith in him : therefore come and lay the hand of faith on the head of this sacrificed Lamb of GOD, and own him as a sacrifice in your stead. When under the deep sense of sin and apprehension of deserved wrath, you flee to Christ, and close with him as the only expiatory sacrifice for sin, then your sins are pardoned, and you are received into favour with GOD ; so that you may come to the Lord's table with humble and holy boldness and confidence as invited guests, friends and favourites of heaven.

Obser. 3. *'Tis the duty and great concernment of all, to behold Christ the Lamb of GOD ; or, to behold him as a sacrificed Lamb.*

This is a duty of so great concern and moment, that John renews the exhortation in verse 36. following my text, *Behold the Lamb of GOD.*

Here I shall shew,

1. *What is the object we are called to behold.*
2. *What this beholding him doth imply.*
3. *How we are to behold him.*
4. *Upon what grounds this is the duty and great concernment of all.*
5. *Make application.*

In all these I shall study brevity.

First, What is the object we are called to behold. And that is, the Lamb of GOD that taketh away the sin of the world : Christ, as a sacrificed lamb, or an expiatory sacrifice for sin. 'Tis true, his person and natures, his offices, his furniture and endowment

resurrection, ascension and sitting at the Father's right hand; none of these are to be excluded from our consideration, when we behold the Lamb of GOD: Yet we are to behold him especially as an expiatory sacrifice for sin, as hanging and bleeding upon the cross, and groaning under the weight of an infinite wrath for our iniquities. The reasons are, 1. 'Tis only an expiatory sacrifice that he answered the demand of the law, and satisfied divine justice; yea, he had never been either king or prophet, unless he had acted the part of a priest, in offering up himself a sacrifice to divine justice. 2. 'Tis especially an expiatory sacrifice for sin, that he is most acceptable to a guilty sinner, that is under the deep sense of sin and apprehension of divine wrath. When the venom of sin begins to work in the conscience, and the punishment of sin is represented in the horrors of it, then the only remedy is in the speedy death of the dear Son of GOD. This is that which encourages poor sensible sinners in their first address to Christ, and that which adds spirit and life to the faith of believers in all their applications to him for pardon and grace.

Secondly, What this beholding the Lamb of GOD doth imply. It is not a beholding him carnally or corporally with the eyes of the flesh: for many beheld him in the days of his flesh, and despised him; they saw no beauty in him why they should love him, Isa. liii. 2. Nor is it a naked speculation, or mere exercise of the understanding, in bare thinking of Christ: for the devil himself cannot be excluded from this.

Positively, This beholding Christ is spiritual. John here does not only point at Christ, as personally present, and an object of their senses; but stirs them up to get a spiritual sight of him by faith, to behold him in the quality of his office. Particularly, this beholding Christ as a sacrificed lamb, implies, 1. *A competent knowledge of Christ* in his person, natures and offices; in what he hath done and suffered for the expiation of sin; in his ability and willingness to save. An ignorant sinner cannot behold the Lamb of GOD. 2. *A clear sight of him by faith.* Spiritual things cannot be seen but by a spiritual eye, and faith is the eye of the soul; 'tis the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. Therefore acts of faith are in scripture often expressed by looking, Isa. xlv. 22.; Heb. xii. 2. Now, that we may behold Christ,

Christ, or a man called Jesus Christ, was crucified at Jerusalem was indeed a matter of sense: but that Christ offered himself sacrifice to GOD, for the expiation of sin, and healing wounded consciences, this is a thing spiritual in its nature, and cannot be seen but by the eye of faith. So, *behold the Lamb of GOD*; that is, get clear and distinct apprehensions of him as if you saw him offered in sacrifice before your eyes, and his being offered in sacrifice for our sins. His being in heaven doth not hinder this sight of faith. 3. *Deep mediation.* The mysteries ought not to be passed over with a few hasty and transient thoughts; for slight thoughts make but a slender impression: therefore let your minds dwell upon them. Consider *High Priest of our profession Jesus Christ*, says the apostle, Hebrews iii. 1. The word signifies *to consider diligently and attentively*; it implies a serious and diligent intention of mind in our thoughts and meditations of Christ. Take a narrow steady view of his death and sufferings, till your thoughts take hold of your hearts. 4. *The soul's fixing on him as the only ground of its hope and expectation.* A poor sensible sinner looks about for help and relief. O! what shall I do? Whether shall I look for help? What shall I give for the sin of my soul? It feels the emptiness of all creature-help, and the utter insufficiency of its own righteousness. But getting a discovery of such an object as Christ, it looks off from all these things, and pitches on him. I see there is no salvation in any other: I can look to none else. Much like the Psalmist, *I looked on my right hand, and beheld but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me, no man cared for my soul. I cried unto thee, O LORD, I am thy servant, thou art my refuge.* Psal. cxiii. 4, 5.

Thirdly, How must we behold the Lamb of GOD? It must be with suitable dispositions and affections; as 1. Behold him believingly, so as to embrace and close with him; else all is but an empty speculation. He is therefore proposed and set forth in the gospel, that sinners may heartily embrace him. Close with him as the only expiatory sacrifice for sin, for the pardon of your sins, the justification of your persons, and the sanctification of your natures. Again, behold him so as to make use of him, for pardon of sin, purging your consciences from unrighteous works, supplying your wants, and recruiting your souls.

ce and strength. 2. Behold him with admiration. We use to admire rare and curious objects: But, was there ever such a creature as Christ? There is no mediator between GOD and man but *he*; no expiatory sacrifice for sin but his; no sufferings like his. When the Lamb of GOD was sacrificed, the creatures were all in an amazement; the earth trembled; the rocks rent; the sun was eclipsed. But ah! for the dulness and stupidity of our hearts. 3. Behold him with application. *What shall we say to these things?* Romans viii. 31. Take up your own hearts. When you behold a bleeding dying Christ, then say, sure this was for my sins, if I have an heart to embrace and close with him. *He loved me*, says the apostle, *and gave himself for me*, Gal. ii. 20. And behold him, so as to compare him with your case; his fulness with your emptiness. There is that in him that can answer all your necessities, and take up your case completely. 4. Behold him *with love to him*. *This is my body which is broken for you*, says Christ. And if he suffered for you; then the more he suffered, the more dear should he be to you. In suffering death and wrath he shewed great love to you. O! that your love may take fire at his. Behold him *with brokenness of heart for sin*. *Look upon him whom you have pierced, till you mourn for him as for an only Son*, 1 John ii. 10. It should break your heart to consider what your sins did to your dearest Lord and Redeemer. "It was the sin of my soul that made his soul heavy, even unto death. Alas! that ever I took pleasure in that which brought so much pain on him." 6. Behold him with thankfulness. In eating the Paschal Lamb, the *children of Israel* gave thanks for their deliverance from Egypt; and certainly the expiation of sin, redemption from wrath, spiritual life and liberty are much more valuable blessings. This sacrament was antiently called the Eucharist, that is, the Thanksgiving; because, in the participation thereof, Christians gave thanks to GOD for the great benefit of redemption: So, when ye behold the Lamb of GOD in this ordinance, lift up your heart to GOD, and give thanks for him, and for the glorious blessings and benefits you have by him. Thus I have shewed you *how we are to behold the Lamb of GOD*. 'Tis a great disparagement to so glorious an object as he is, to behold him without suitable affections.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Upon what grounds is it the duty and great concernment of all, to behold the Lamb of GOD? 1. This is expressly commanded here in the text; and again in v. 36. Behold the Lamb of GOD. And he calls by the prophet, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. I said behold me, behold me unto a nation that was not called by my name, Isa. xlv. 22 and lxxv. 1. Now sense of unworthiness should not hinder your obedience to the command of GOD; for your unworthiness doth not loose your obligation to duty. 2. This beholding the Lamb of GOD is the foundation and ground work of all true religion. All religion depends on it. Hence it was the great duty to which John exhorted his hearers. 'Tis the sum and substance of all religion, so that all religion without it is but a glittering shew. Yea, other religious duties, such as self-examination, reading and hearing the word, prayer, are designed in order to this, that you may come and behold the Lamb of GOD represented to you in this ordinance. 3. The Lamb of GOD is therefore proposed and set forth in the gospel, that you may behold him. A crucified Christ, the sacrificed Lamb of GOD is the spectacle that the gospel proposes to you. He is evidently set forth before your eyes crucified among you, Gal. iii. 1. He is lifted up upon the pole of the gospel, that he may be conspicuous to the eye of your faith. 4. Rightly beholding the Lamb of GOD is absolutely necessary, in order to your receiving benefit by him. As no stung Israélite received benefit by the brazen serpent, unless he looked up to it; so none can have benefit by Christ who do not behold him. If you slight Christ, and look to other things for help and relief, you are eternally undone: but when you believingly behold the Lamb of GOD, then he and all his purchased benefits are your's; your eternal salvation is then secured. Look unto me, says he, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, Isa. xlv. 22.

Fifthly, I proceed now to the application.

Use 1. For lamentation, over the carelets multitude of professors of religion. Alas! many are taken up in beholding vanity, and will not once behold the Lamb of GOD doing so good an office for poor sinners. O! how many let loose their eyes unto vanity and sin, being addicted to please themselves with rare and curious, or beautiful and glorious objects? But, what is all the

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omp, splendor, and beauty of the world but a *vain shew*? Psal. xxix. 6. And how sad is the issue of such carnal liberty? Alas! by pleasing the eye, they give sad wounds to the heart. Alas! what contempt do ye pour on the Lamb of G O D, when ye gratifying your eyes with vain objects, ye fill your minds with vain thoughts and speculations, so that serious thoughts of dying bleeding Christ can have no place? Alas! that when Christ hath shewed so much love to sinners, in suffering so much to take away their sins, mere vanities should be preferred before him!

Use 2. For *Exhortation*. I invite you to come and *behold the Lamb of GOD that takes away the sin of the world*: Behold him as an expiatory sacrifice for sin.

This being a duty of so great concernment to us, I shall urge a little by these following motives.

1. *This is your proper work at this time*. In this great ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Christ is represented as a sacrifice for sin: the sacrament is a picture of him hanging on the cross, broken, bleeding, and dying for our iniquities; so that now it may be said in a special manner, *Behold the Lamb of G O D that taketh away the sin of the world*. Christ's voice to you now is, *Behold me, behold me: look unto me, and be ye saved*. Behold your nearest Redeemer bleeding and dying to take away your sin.

2. Consider *the excellency of the object*; a crucified Christ; the Lamb of GOD; the only true propitiating sacrifice for sin; the most powerful means of your good. Here is presented to your view a crucified Saviour, that suits all the wants and necessities of your soul. O how beautiful and amiable a sight is this to a poor lost sinner! Other objects are not worth your while; but here is a glorious and heart-drawing object. The queen of Sheba came a far journey to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and to see his glory, 1 Kings x. 1, &c. *But behold a greater than Solomon is here*; Luke xi. 31

3. *Unless you rightly behold the Lamb of G O D, you can have no benefit by the sacrament*. 'Tis to no purpose to you to come to a communion-table, if you have not this upon your heart. It is only a beholding him believingly that draws virtue from him in the use of this ordinance. Therefore look not at the

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bread

bread and wine only, but *behold the Lamb of GOD that takes away the sin of the world.*

4. The right beholding of the Lamb of GOD will have great and unspeakable advantages; as 1. It will take your heart off other things, the vanities of the world, and the pleasures of sin. A crucified Christ is a taking object. By beholding him you will discover so much beauty in him, as will make all the fancied glory and beauty of other things to disappear, and break all engagements between your heart and other lovers. 2. It will give you a discovery of the horrid nature of sin. All the curses of the law; all the dreadful judgments that GOD hath either threatened or executed for sin, cannot give such a discovery of the cursed and bitter nature of sin, as you may have in the glass of Christ's bitter sufferings here represented in this ordinance. Sin is then seen in its ugliest shape, when 'tis seen in the pain and agonies of the Son of GOD. 3. It will give you a comfortable and satisfying view of the glory of GOD. This is to be seen only *in the face of Christ*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. A sight of GOD out of Christ is terrible; for *our GOD is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29. But in Christ we may have a pleasant and lightful sight of his glory. In him we may see the love and grace of GOD breaking out wonderfully toward poor sinners. In him we may see wrath appeased, justice satisfied, and mercy rejoicing against judgment, and justice and mercy meeting together, and combining to promote the happiness of believers. Now, what an inestimable blessing is it to see the glory of GOD! This is the great request of the saints. *I beseech thee*, says Moses, *shew me thy glory*, Exod. xxxiii. 18. And 'tis this that renders the ordinance so desirable to them, that they may behold *the beauty of the LORD*, and *see his power and glory in the sanctuary*, Psal. xxvii. 4. and lxiii. 2. 4. It will transform you into his likeness, and engage you to an imitation of him. All, says the apostle, *with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD*, 2 Cor. iii. Seeing Christ in the other world will make us like him: *we shall be like him*, says the apostle, *for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. Now, the sight of faith hath the same effects as that of immediate vision, according to its degree and proportion.

It will bring in necessary supplies of grace and strength, light and life into your souls. *They looked unto him.* says the Psalmist, *and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed,* Psal. xxxiv.

6. It will quicken your sacramental graces. Right beholding the *Lamb of GOD* will draw out your faith in him; enflame your love to him; melt your heart under the sense of sin; stir up in holy admiration of the love and grace of GOD in Christ; and it may fill your heart with unspeakable joy: *In whom,* says the apostle, *tho' now you see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,* 1 Pet. i. 8. 7. O how refreshing and satisfying may it be! It is even heaven begun here on earth.

It will be the employment of believers in heaven to behold the *Lamb of GOD*. Hence our blessed Saviour prays, *Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me,* John xvii.

24. The right beholding the *Lamb of GOD* in the sacrament of the supper, will set you in the suburbs of glory; so that you will be ready to say with Jacob, *This is none other but the house of GOD; and this is the gate of heaven,* Gen. xxviii. 17. Old Simeon, when he saw Christ, cried out, *LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,* Luke ii. 29, 30. q. d. "LORD, now it is enough; I desire no more: I am content now to take my farewell of all the enjoyments and comforts of this world, seeing I have seen him who is infinitely better." 8. It will be a good remedy against all your distempers, and give support and relief in all your complaints and burdens.

Are there any of you that make light of sin, and are easily overcome by temptations to it? O come here! and behold the *Lamb of GOD*. See here the price of sin, and what it cost the dear *Son of GOD* to expiate it. Would no less satisfy for sin than the heart-blood of the *immaculate Lamb of GOD*, and his being scorched and roasted in the fire of divine wrath? And will ye after all this go on in sin, and count it a light matter?

Are there any of you who complain of hard hearts that cannot mourn for sin? O look hither! and behold the *Lamb of GOD*: behold the dear *Son of GOD* brought as a lamb to the slaughter for thee a vile polluted sinner. Bring thy thoughts close to this subject. Behold him bleeding and dying for thine

iniquities. O who ever loved thee at the rate that Christ hath done! Fix your eyes here a while, till your eye affect your heart.

Are there any of you groaning under spiritual plagues? Come and behold the *Lamb of GOD*. 'Tis a looking to him believingly that heals them that are stung with the old serpent. We lift him up to you in this gospel, that poor distressed sinners may behold him. O look earnestly! There is a fulness of healing virtue in him.

Are any of you impatient under the crosses and afflictions ye meet with? To such also, I say, Behold the *Lamb of GOD*. He was a lamb for meekness in all his sufferings. How quietly did he come to the altar? *The cup which my Father hath given me, says he, shall I not drink it?* John xviii. 11. O how quietly and meekly did he stand under the wrath both of GOD and man! Let this convince and shame you, that you are so unlike him in this.

Are there any of you that cannot bear injuries from men? Your spirits are presently in an uproar, and your hearts swell with revenge. O come! and behold the *Lamb of GOD*. *He opened not his mouth*, Isa. liii. 7. when he suffered vile indignities at the hands of men; and can ye bear nothing? Yea, how earnestly did he pray for them that racked and tortured him on the cross; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*, Luke xxiii. 34. Behold him, and learn to be more like him.

Are there any of you sore weighted under the sense of sin, ready to sink under the burden of it, and giving way to despondency and discouragement? O come! and behold the *Lamb of GOD that taketh away the sin of the world*. What if there be a world of sin in you? Yet he that takes away the sin of the world, can take away your sin too. Your case cannot exceed the virtue of this sacrifice. No sin can stand before the efficacy of this blood. And how willing must he be to take away sin, when this is his office, and he hath done and suffered so much for this end? When you come to Christ, that he may take away our sin, he will surely make you welcome; for in so doing you fall in with him in the great end and design of his incarnation, death and sufferings.

But what shall we do that we may rightly behold the *Lamb of GOD*

GOD in this great ordinance? I give these directions; 1. *Study your souls case much.* Consider seriously what your wants are that need to be supplied; what graces need to be strengthened; what sins need to be mortified: for ye are to behold the Lamb of GOD with particular application to your own case. 2. Take that direction which the spouse gives, *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon*, Cant. iii. 11. Would ye behold Christ? then *go forth*. Go forth from the world and your sins, and rouse up yourselves: Shake off security, sloth and laziness; for 'tis not a lazy looking on a crucified Christ that will serve the turn. 3. *Let your meditations be deep and serious.* Slight meditations are never effectual to warm the heart; therefore think, and think again. Such a glorious object as a crucified Christ, calls for the greatest intention of heart and consideration of mind: Therefore, labour to restrain your minds from these thoughts, cares and affections that may entangle or hinder you, that your minds may be intent on your work. Be diligent with GOD for restraints of special grace. Hence, *Now and then dart up holy desires to GOD by way of prayer.* Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. LORD, increase my faith. LORD, reveal Christ in me." Cry for *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*, Eph. i. 17. Plead the help of the Holy Spirit: for all your thoughts of a crucified Christ will be dead and cold without his gracious influence. See that you *use the help of this great ordinance of the supper.* We are usually more excited by sensible than by insensible objects; so that there is a great aptitude in this ordinance to assist you in beholding the Lamb of GOD. The sacrament is a representation of Christ hanging and bleeding on the cross for our sins. His death is shewed forth. Here his passion is acted over in figure and representation; He is crucified before your eyes. Gal. iii. 1. On this ordinance he hath engraven the traits of dying love: so that here is a lively objective mean to affect your heart, and a mean of his own appointment, and consequently under the promise of a blessing.

But some serious Christians may object, "Gladly would I see this, to behold the Lamb of GOD; but alas! I cannot see it; I have no skill in this matter; I know not how to set it out." But Oh! do not give it over as an hopeless business

ness. Be often trying what you can do in beholding the Law of GOD ; and when one essay misgives, try another, and at last that a third, and never give over. Oh ! do not dispute against your duty, nor please yourselves with lazy and idle complaints, but set to your work : for GOD can make it easy to you. Be always looking up to GOD for help, and be always trying what his grace will help you to do in this matter. Sit not down under a sense of dispondency and discouragement, but up and be doing, and the LORD will be with you. 'Tis his way to help the serious striving soul, and to lead the blind in a way that they know not.

S E R M O N IV.

After the LORD's SUPPER.

Being a PERSUASIVE to PREPARATION for
second Coming of CHRIST.

Luke xii. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

*Let your Loins be girded about, and your Light burning.
And ye yourselves like unto Men, that wait for their Lord,
he will return from the Wedding, that when he cometh
knocketh, they may open unto him immediately,
Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord, when he cometh,
find watching: Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird
himself, and make them to sit down to Meat, and will come
and serve them.*

*And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third
and find them so, blessed are these Servants.*

*And this know, that if the Good-man of the House had known
the Hour the Thief would come, he would have watched, and
have suffered his House to be broken through.*

*Be ye therefore ready also: For the Son of Man cometh at an hour
when ye think not.*

HOW many sweet and edifying sermons and discourses our blessed Saviour, in the days of his flesh, delivered to his disciples and the multitude, out of a tender concern for

od of their souls? *His lips were like lillies droping sweet smelling myrrhe*, Cant. v. 13. O the many gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth!

These verses are a part of one of his excellent sermons. In the two preceeding verses, he had charged his disciples to forsake all from all their earthly enjoyments, and to set their hearts upon the other world, that thereby it might appear that their chief treasure lay there. And in the verses I have read, he exhorts them to endeavour to be in a constant readiness for that day, when they that had set their hearts upon the happiness above should enter on the enjoyment of it; and that is, the day of Christ's second coming.

We may in these verses observe these three things.

1. *A plain intimation of Christ's second coming.* This is held forth in v. 36. and 38. under the notion of a certain Lord or Master after his returning home from a wedding late at night; either in the second watch, just before midnight; or in the third watch, next after midnight: For in these countries their weddings were celebrated in the night. The time of Christ's coming is here represented to be *in the night*; yea, far in the night, about midnight. Hence it is said, in the *Parable of the Ten Virgins*, at midnight there was a cry made, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*, Mat. xxv. 6 And Jerom says, that it was an ancient tradition, that Christ should come at midnight. But the expression is designed to intimate his coming by way of surprise, when the world is most secure, and even his own people weary of looking for him. Hence it is often compared to *the coming of a thief in the night*, 1 Thess. v. 2. Rev. xvi. 15.

2. *The duty required of us with reference to his coming:* Our hearts must be girt about, and our light burning, v. 35. We must wait for our Lord, v. 36. and watch for his coming, v. 37. The general import of all which is expressed in v. 40. *Be ye therefore ready also.* Here is an allusion to servants watching and waiting in the night-time for their master's return home, having their long garments girded up about their loins, still busy about his work, and ready to meet him; and having their lights burning, to light their master into his house, and up to his chamber: intimating to us, that the loins of our minds must be girded up, and our graces kept in a lively exercise, that we may be

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be in a readiness for whatever our Lord and Master Christ may call us unto; and thus watch and wait for his coming without wearying.

3. *The arguments used to press this duty; and they are chiefly two.* The 1st is taken from the great happiness of those who Christ when he comes shall find ready. *Blessed are these servants,* says he, v. 37. And again, v. 38. *Blessed are these servants.* And their happiness is more particularly expressed in these words *Verily, I say unto you that he (i. e. the Lord of these servants) shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them:* Very high metaphorical expressions of the happiness above; as we shall hear afterwards. The 2d is taken from the ordinary prudence of men in the like cases, v. 39, 40. The plain meaning is, every wise man will watch, to prevent a thief his doing any mischief, if he has any intimation of his coming: And shall not we, who have notice of Christ's coming as a thief in the night, be wise for our own souls, by studying to be always ready, that so his coming may surprise us not to our confusion and ruin?

The doctrine I propose is this.

Blessed and happy are they, whose earnest endeavour it is to be always in a readiness for Christ's second coming; or, whom Christ at his coming shall find ready.

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

1. That Christ who is gone to heaven will come again.
2. Wherein our Readiness for Christ's second Coming doth consist.
3. Why we should be always in a readiness for it.
4. How, and in what respects they are blessed, whom Christ at his coming shall find ready,
5. I shall apply the whole.

First, Christ who is gone to heaven will come again. He compares himself to a certain Lord or Master, who returns home at night from a wedding. Now, Christ, at his second coming may be said to return from the wedding, in a twofold respect. 1. Because in heaven he is at work in sending the spirit, as an agent, to gain the consent of sinners to the happy marriage with him; which consent being gained, causes great joy in heaven like the joy of a wedding: and this work being finished, he will come again to solemnize the marriage with them, and to make them reap the blessed fruits of it. 2. In regard of the unsp

ple joy Christ hath in heaven, from the *glory* he is entered into after his sufferings, Heb. xii. 2. Luke xxiv. 36. This may be resembled to the joy and glory of a wedding. But Christ is not taken up with it, as to forget his poor friends and followers here on earth: He will return from this wedding, to compleat the happiness of his faithful servants.

There are many warnings and advertisements given of his coming, in the holy scriptures; and they are usually expressed in the present time, to denote the certainty of it. *Behold the bridegroom cometh*, Mat. xxv. 6. *Behold he cometh with clouds*, Rev. i. 7. *Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints*, Jude, verse 14. His coming is as certain as if he were already on his way. Christ himself gives warning of it to all the churches. *Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*, Rev. iii. 11. And no less than three times in the last chapter of the Bible: Rev. xxii. 7. *Behold, I come quickly*; and again, v. 12. *And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me*; and a third time, v. 20. *He which testifieth these things saith, surely, I come quickly*. He hath entered into a marriage-covenant with his people; and sends them frequent tokens of his love, in prayers, sermons, and sacraments, to assure them that he will come again, and consummate the marriage. And as he comes on that day, to consummate the marriage with his people; so he comes to take account of his servants, how they have employed their talents; Mat. v. 19. what service he hath had from them; and what improvement they have made of his ordinances. And he will come suddenly and unexpectedly, as a thief in the night, when he is least looked for. *For the Son of Man cometh*, says he in the Mat. xxiv. 44. *at an hour when ye think not*. The time of his coming is all uncertain; and will be to many very surprising.

Secondly, *Wherein doth our readiness for Christ's coming consist?* I advert, that when I speak of our readiness for Christ's coming. I would be understood as speaking indifferently, either of his coming to us at death, or of his second personal coming to judgment: because the time of our life here, is the only time we have for making preparation for his second coming. If you are not ready for his coming at death, you can never be ready for his coming to judgment.

I

Now,

Now, our *readiness for Christ's coming* is expressed here in four particulars 1. *Our loins must be girt about.* 2. *Our light burning* 3. *We must wait for our Lord.* And, 4. *Watch for his coming.* I shall speak a very little upon each of them.

1. *Our loins must be girt about.* Here is a plain allusion to the custom of the eastern countries, where both masters and servants did wear long garments, which they girt up about their loins, when they prepared and made themselves ready, either for journey, or for fighting, or for running, or for any laborious work. So that the expression here used implies these two things: 1. *That our great Lord and Master Christ hath given us much work to do;* great, weighty, and difficult work. We have a race to run; a great journey to go; a warfare to accomplish; a weighty work and business to be done, 2 Kings iv. 29; 1 Kings xx. 11 and xviii. 46. Luke xvii. 8. Heb. xii. 2. Our work is such as requires *diligence and industry*: We must not trifle, but be busy and hard at work. And it is such work as must be done with expedition: It requires speed and dispatch. We must be quick, and lose no time; because our work is great, and our time short. 2. *An actual readiness and preparedness for our work.* This is the general import of that expression of having *the loins girded about.* We must be of a prompt and ready disposition in a prepared frame, for running our Christian race, and going thro' with our Christian work and warfare, we must be *ready for every good work*, Tit. iii. 1. and *stand having our loins girt about with truth*, Eph. vi. 14, in a readiness for our Christian warfare. In this sense, the apostle exhorts us to *girt up the loins of our mind*, 1 Peter i. 13. Particularly it implies, (1) *Serious and earnest endeavours to free ourselves of every thing that may unfit us for, or hinder us in our Master's work;* such as carnal and corrupt affections, worldly cares and sorrows, perplexing doubts and fears, distracting thoughts, sad distempers of heart. These and the like incumber the soul, like long garments hanging about the feet. Therefore we *gird up our loins* when we endeavour to have them removed. (2) *Our stirring up ourselves.* Such as *gird up their loins*, rouse up themselves to their business. So you must bestir yourselves; shake off sloth and laziness; stir up the grace of GOD that is in you that you may buckle to your work, like men that resolve

make a business of it, and to be in good earnest in it. (3) A gathering in the strength of our souls to our work. The loins are the seat of strength: Hence, men use to gird their loins, when they would put forth their strength in what they have to do. So, 'tis said of that industrious woman, that *she girdeth her loins with strength*, Proverbs xxxi, 17. We must gather the strength of our souls together; gather in our thoughts and affections from gadding abroad; yea, call in all the powers and faculties of our souls, that our whole heart and soul may be intent upon our Lord's business. (4) Firm resolution. Such *girded up their loins* were resolute for what they had to do, we must arm ourselves with holy resolution and fortitude of mind, against difficulties, terrors and dangers. Holy courage must be put on, that we may go on in our Christian work and warfare without fear or fainting, whatever may be in our way. Let us remember, that our *great Lord and Master Christ* hath given us much work to do; great and weighty work; and work wherein we must resolve to meet with many difficulties, and much opposition; and we ourselves are weak: therefore, nothing will be done to purpose, unless our *loins be thus girt up*. This is one end for which we come to the sacrament that we may get our loins girt up, that so we may be in a prompt and ready disposition for the Lord's work, for running our Christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith, and particularly our battle with death. If yet you are not ready, then make yourself ready, and improve the sacrament for this end: but, if you are in some good measure ready, then keep you ready: stand in your loins girt about; you know not how soon the Lord cometh.

Our light must be burning. We may the better understand what is meant by this, if we compare the *Parable of the Ten Virgins*. Both the *wise and foolish Virgins* had *lamps*: but the *wise* took oil in their vessels with their lamps, which the foolish did not, Mat. xxv. So that by *lamps*, we are to understand external profession of Christianity; and by *oil in the vessel*, the principle of grace in the heart, necessary to maintain that profession, and to keep the lamp burning. Hypocrites may seem to have *burning lights or lamps*. They may have a fair shining profession that makes a great blaze, but really doth not burn:

there is light, but no heat in it. Or, if it seem to burn yet it will not hold out at Christ's coming. not being furnished with a principle of grace, but only at best with some common motions of the spirit, and sudden transient affections.

By light then, or lamps burning, we are to understand grace in a lively exercise, discovering its influence and efficacy in all parts of our conversation. So that the expression implies, *A principle of grace in the heart.* This is like oil in the vessel necessary to keep our light burning. Without this the fairest blaze of an outward profession will not serve the turn for the present; for, *the King's daughter is all glorious within*; Psalm xlv. 13. and GOD will not be put off with fair shews and appearances, but *desires truth in the inward parts*, Psalm li. And it will not long hold out, at least, not endure the glory of Christ's presence. At his coming he will disprove all the pleas and pretences of the fairest painted hypocrite. If you have no oil of grace, when the bridegroom cometh, your lamp will be gone out. 2. That *this principle of grace must be exercised.* Grace must shine forth, be in actual exercise: It must flow out in our carriage and behaviour, as streams from a fountain, for the refreshing ourselves and others. *He that believeth on me, says Christ, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*, John vii. 38. Grace is a vital principle, and cannot ly hid in the heart. The life and seed of grace must shew itself in the fruits of it. 3. That *grace be in a [lively] exercise* that so our light may burn bright. We must trim our lamps, rouse up ourselves; stir up the grace of GOD in us, that our faith may be more vigorous, our love more fervent, our hope more lively; that our profession and practice of godliness may be more lively and powerful, and every part of our conversation favour of serious religion. 4. That *grace be [kept] lively.* That the lamps of the sanctuary were never to go out, but to burn always, Exodus xxvii. 20. Our light must be kept burning that we may be in a constant readiness for immediate communion with Christ; always ready to go out to meet the bridegroom, and to set sail for the other world.

This also is one great end for which we come to the sacrament, that we may trim our lights or lamps, get our graces quickened to a lively exercise. True, we should endeavour

we grace in a lively exercise, when we come to *the table of the* Lord; yet they come on a good errand who come to get grace made more lively. Therefore, if your light be dim, trim it; stir up your graces, and be earnest to have them made lively; and labour to improve the sacrament for this end. If your light burn bright, keep it burning; you know not how soon the bridegroom cometh.

3. We must wait for our Lord. Waiting is a complex grace, wherein faith, hope, and patience are drawn out in a continued exercise. It respects good things to come, but delayed and desired. What is seen and present, we need not wait for: Rom. vii. 24, 25. what is evil, we fear and seek to avoid, but do not wait for it; and we need not wait, if there be no delay. So that waiting for Christ's coming implies; 1. An expecting and looking for his coming. There is no waiting without expectation. We must look on Christ's coming as sure and certain, and in the expectation of it, be still looking for him. *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Tit ii. 13* 2. A desiring and longing for his coming. Waiting implies an earnest and desirous expectation. We must wait for Christ, as the watchman waits for the morning, Psal. cxxx. 6. who earnestly desires and longs for it. O when will he come! O that he may make wide steps! *When so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly. We should be looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of GOD, 2 Pet. iii. 12.* The saints would even hasten it, if they could. *Make haste, my beloved, says the spouse, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices, Cant. viii. 14.* 3. Patience in expecting and longing for his coming. Hence we read of the patient waiting for Christ, 2 Thess. iii. 5. There is a twofold patience implied in (1) *Patience in bearing with delays.* Christ delays his coming for just and convenient reasons; which is expressed in the *parable by the tarrying of the Bridegroom, Mat. xxv. 5.* Therefore we must wait his leisure; leave it to him to take his own time, and to moderate his own pace; refer it to his good pleasure, when our warfare shall be accomplished, and the crown set upon our head. The apostle presses this under the similitude of the husband-man: *Behold, says he, the Husband-man waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and bath long patience for it, until he receive*

receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, James v. 7.
 (2) *Patience in persevering and continuing at our work*, notwithstanding of trials and difficulties in our way. Much work and labour is required of us, and there are many difficulties and much opposition to wrestle with; temptations from Satan, trials from GOD, and troubles from men: therefore, patience is necessary, we may not faint and weary. For we have need of patience, says the apostle, that after ye have done the will of GOD, ye might receive the promise: For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come and will not tarry, Heb. x. 36, 37. We must patiently continue in well doing, Rom. ii. 7.

We must thus wait in the way of our duty, with our loins girt about, and our light burning: and we must continue waiting till Christ's coming. Some of you have, thro' grace, waited long: O do not weary now; for now your salvation is near, and Christ's coming nearer, than when ye believed, Rom. xiii. 12. Christ will come quickly, and take you off your post; and then shall you say with joy and gladness, Lo this is our GOD, we have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the LORD, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation, Isaiah xxv. 9. His coming is well worth the waiting for. That day will be a joyful day to you who have chosen him for your master, and have resigned yourselves to him to be his servants. On that day your blessed Saviour will appear in his glory; and your desires shall be satisfied, and your hopes accomplished, then your grace will all be glory. O it will be a glorious day to you! It is the marriage-day: then you shall meet with your dear and glorious bridegroom, and he and ye shall never part again.

4. We must watch for Christ's coming: that is, we must be on our guard, and take good heed to ourselves, that we be not surprized, and that that day do not come upon us unawares. Take ye heed, says our Lord, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is, Mark xiii. 33. Take heed that that day come not upon you as a snare. Take heed to yourselves, says our Lord, lest that day come upon you unawares: For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. There is a twofold

watching required. 1. *A watching for the performance of* So, *watch, and pray*: Mark xiii. 33. *watch, and be so-*
 1 Thess. v. 6. *watch, and keep your garments*, Rev. xvi. 15.
 in other duties: for watching is necessary to the right
 performance of every duty. So here, watch, that you may wait
 in your loins girt about, and your light burning. Take heed
 yourselves, that your interest in Christ be secured, that you
 be found in him on that day. Take heed that you have
 grace, and grace in a lively exercise. Take heed to yourselves,
 you be always in a prompt and ready disposition for duty;
 that you lay hold on and improve all opportunities of doing
 good. Take heed that you perform duties with holy seriousness
 diligence, spirituality and liveliness. Watch, that ye may
 obtain that gracious temper and disposition of mind, that ye
 would wish to be in when Christ comes again. Take heed that
 ye be still about your Lord's work, that when he comes he may
 find you idle. 2. *A watching to avoid evil*. So many snares
 temptations there are without, and so much strong corrup-
 tion within, that the avoiding of evil requires much holy care
 and caution. Watch against whatever may unfit you for meet-
 ing with Christ. Watch against all known iniquity. Watch,
 that ye may keep your garments clean and undefiled. *Behold, I*
come as a thief, says Christ, *blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth*
his garments, Rev. xvi. 15. Watch even against gross sins; for
 even the best men need to watch against the vilest sins. That's a
 reason that our blessed Saviour thought meet to give even to
 his own disciples; *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your*
garments be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of
this life; and so that day come upon you unawares, Luke xxi. 34.
 Watch against distempers of heart, deadness, dulness, drowsiness,
 slothfulness, backwardness to duty, wearying of G O D, spiritual
 darkness and slumbering. Christ cometh to take an account of
 us therefore, watch against whatever may render your ac-
 counts perplexed. And see that ye continue watching. 'Tis
 for a sentinel to be found sleeping, tho' he hath watched a
 long time. See that Christ, when he comes, find you watching
 and ready. *Ye therefore*, says Christ, *lest coming suddenly, he find you*
asleep, Mark xiii. 35. 36. Look to it that your candle never
 go out. How sad is it to fall asleep, when death may be just at
 your

your back, and ye may be suddenly called to go out and meet the Bridegroom

I proceed to shew,

Thirdly, Why we should study to be always in a readiness for Christ's second coming. I shall notice only four or five grounds or reasons of this in the verses I have read for my text.

1. The relation between Christ and us obliges us to this. Christ is our Lord and Master, and we are his servants. We call him Lord and Master, and we all profess to be his servants. Many of you have made solemn profession hereof this day. Your eating and drinking at the Lord's table was a solemn profession before GOD, angels and men, that you did choose Christ for your Master, and joined yourselves to him to be his servants: and I am hopeful that not a few have done so sincerely. And ye are not only working but waiting servants, servants to wait on him, and to run his errands, and servants to wait for him, and expect his coming, verse 38. The relation obliges you to be always in a readiness, that when he knocketh, you may open to him immediately.

2. *The uncertainty of the time of Christ's Coming* should prompt us to be in a constant readiness for it: *Be ye therefore ready* as he says he, verse 40, *for the Son of Man cometh in an hour when ye think not.* And says he elsewhere, *But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, — Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. — Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh at even, or at mid-night, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning,* Mark xiii. 32, 33, 35. Our life in this world is like a night; and a dark night it is, if compared with eternal life: and we know not at what watch or hour of the night our Lord will come. And he hath wisely kept us at an uncertainty in this matter, for this very end, to deter us from sloth and security, and that he may have us always ready.

3. *The consideration of the sad and lamentable condition of those who shall be surpris'd being unready, when Christ comes again.* How sad is it when a thief surprizes the good man of an house, verse 39. and spoils his goods? We have each of us an house to keep, in which all our chief concerns are laid up, and our house is our precious soul. Now, if Christ at his coming

all find you unready, your house will be broken up, and your great concerns will be lost; all your hopes, joys and comforts shall be gone. Christ will come upon you *as a thief in the night*, and divine justice will seize on all you have, your utter undoing: therefore be always ready. *Watch ye therefore*, says Christ, — — *Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*, Mark xiii. 35, 36. If he find you sleeping, secure, without your guard, indulging yourselves in ease and sloth, thoughts of his coming, and unready to meet him: then the day of his coming will be a dismal and dreadful day to you. His coming, whether at death or judgment, will be terrible to careless and sleepy professors. When the cry is made, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh*, what then will ye do? And what will come of you, if ye be not ready to meet him? And suppose your chief interest be secured, yet his coming will be a surprize to you as it was to the *wise Virgins*, who slept and slumbered with the rest. You will lose much of your peace and comfort, and be in great confusion in your latter-end. When the cry comes to awaken you at death, how sad may your case be, if you be not ready? What fear and shame, confusion and distraction may there be, if ye are taken unawares? What a hurry will your soul be in to make ready? And in this hurry, you may have enough ado to get ready.

Another reason is taken, from *the ordinary prudence of men in like cases*. And this know, says Christ, verse 39, 40. *that the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through*. Be ye therefore ready also. There is no wise man but will watch, tho' it were at midnight, to prevent the stealing of his goods, if he certainly know of a thief's coming: shall not we much more watch, and be ready, when all our precious things are in danger, that Christ may not come as a thief in the night? Our blessed Lord here appeals to our sense of common dangers, as a witness against them who do not make ready to meet Christ, tho' they have many warnings and advertisements given of his coming. Would we not call him very foolish, who will not watch to keep his house, when he know a thief is coming? And are not they much more and foolish, who will not watch and make ready, tho' they

know that Christ is coming to call them to an account, and to find them before his dreadful tribunal? In this case, men's own consciences may upbraid them with unaccountable folly.

5. *Our being always ready will turn to our own great account.* The issue of Christ's coming shall be happy and comfortable to such as shall be found ready. This leads me to the next general head proposed, viz.

Fourthly, How and in what respects they are or shall be blessed whom Christ, when he comes, shall find ready. Blessed are these servants, says he, verse 37. And again, verse 38. *Blessed are the servants.* Importing, 1. That they shall be certainly blessed. Christ himself pronounces them blessed; therefore they must needs be so. And he says not, Blessed shall they be. but, blessed are they. 'Tis expressed in the present time, to shew that their happiness is as sure as if it were already compleat. And 'tis doubled, like Pharaoh's dream: Gen. xli. 32. *Blessed are they; and again, Blessed are they:* to shew, that the thing is effected by GOD. 2. That they shall be unspeakably and unceivably blessed. *Blessed are they:* and again, *Blessed are they.* Yea, thrice blessed and happy are they, whom Christ at his coming shall find ready. But how blessed, none can tell: their happiness will be better felt on that day, than now it can be expressed.

Their happiness is more particularly expressed in these words, verse 37. *Verily, I say unto you, that he, i. e. the Lord of the servants, shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* Here are very high metaphorical expressions of the blessedness and happiness of the life to come. These expressions are ushered in by an asseveration, and delivered on Christ's own word; *Verily, I say unto you:* importing, 1. That it is such happiness as is hard to be believed. That Christ will do so great things for poor vile unworthy creatures, could never have entered into our thoughts. And now, when it is revealed, it is hard for such as are deeply impress'd with a sense of their own vileness and unworthiness to believe the truth of it. 2. That yet it is most certain. *Verily* is an asseveration often used by our blessed Saviour, to confirm the truth of his doctrine or to ascertain the truth and certainty of some future event. Here 'tis verily true; verily it shall be so. And [I] say unto you

to am truth itself, and cannot lie to you: *I, who am the faith- and true witness.* Christ asserts it upon his own word; and need that is enough to satisfy us.

But let us consider the expression itself. *He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* We may observe here, 1. *Their great happiness.* 2. *How Christ will interest himself in it.*

1. The great happiness of these whom Christ, when he comes, will find ready. They shall *sit down, and sit down to meat*, and Christ will *make them sit down*; importing, 1. *An happy rest.* 2. *Fulness of joy and satisfaction.* 3. *Great honour and dignity.*

(1) An happy rest from all their wrestlings, sorrows and labours. As servants, coming from their labour, are set down to rest; so, *there remains a rest for the people of GOD*, Heb.

9. Here they have many wrestlings with their enemies, sin, Satan, and the world: but there, their warfare being accomplished, they shall rest from a wrestling and fighting life; for all shall be utterly abolished, Satan trodden under their feet, the world and all its pleasant things burnt up with fire, and wicked men thrust down to hell. Again, Here they meet with variety of troubles and afflictions: but they shall rest from troubles

when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 2 Thess i. 7. Then all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and sorrowing and sighing shall flee away.

Again, Here they have a great deal of work and labour: But they shall rest from their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. True it is, in

even there shall be no rest from the service of GOD: for his servants shall serve him; yea, serve him day and night,

xxii. 3. and vii. 15, without either weakness or weariness. they shall rest from the labours of their particular callings

in the world; and in some respect from the labours of their general calling of Christianity; such labours as are occasioned by

want of a full enjoyment of GOD, or by the remainders of sin, or by the weakness of grace, or by the imperfect state of

the church, or by the relations wherein they stand to others in the world. So that the rest above shall be, 1. *A full, compleat*

perfect rest, without any mixture of trouble or disquiet. 2. *A sweet and satisfying rest.* O! what sweet refreshment of soul;

what tranquillity of heart and mind; what complacency in the

immediate vision and full fruition of GOD? The saints shall be fully content, and not seek any where else to make up their happiness. 3. *An uninterrupted and undisturbed rest.* No disturbance can arise from without, or from within. 4. *An eternal rest.* They shall rest for evermore.

(2) *Fulness of joy and satisfaction.* They shall not only sit down but sit down to meat. The joys and pleasures of heaven are in the holy scriptures often expressed under the notion of a feast. *I appoint unto you a kingdom,* says Christ, *that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom,* Luke xxii. 29, 30. And elsewhere, it expresseth the happiness above, by the pleasure of a banquet of wine: *I will not drink henceforth,* says he, *of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,* Mat. xxvi. 29. O what a feast will the feast of glory be! It shall be, 1. *A full and compleat feast.* There is drink as well as meat; and great plenty and abundance to both, and of the best. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house,* says the Psalmist, *and thou shalt make them to drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,* Psal. xxxvi. 8. In heaven there is great plenty of the choicest dainties that infinite wisdom and grace could provide. The good cheer there exceeds all hypotheses. What blessed fruit doth *the tree of life* yield in the midst of the *Paradise of GOD*? Rev. ii. 7. There is all that an enlightened and enlarged soul can desire or receive. There is no want there; but full enjoyment. 2. *A feast fully satisfying* They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of GOD's house; Psal. xxxvi. 8. satisfied with a fulness of happiness and glory. All their wants are fully supplied, all their desires fully satisfied, all their capacities completely filled. There is full satisfaction in the vision and fruition of GOD. As for me, says the Psalmist, *I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness,* Psal. xvii. 15. 3. *A joyful feast.* There is joy and mirth at a feast; so there is fulness of joy in heaven. *thy presence,* says the Psalmist, *is fulness of joy,* Psal. xvi. 15. Even the joy that the saints have in this life, is unspeakable. *full of glory* 1 Pet. i. 8. And if even the hope and expectation of heaven fills the hearts of believers with unspeakable joy, how great then must the joys of heaven be? 4. *A feast with the choicest and best of company.* They shall sit down with

am, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: Mat. viii.

1. Yea, Christ himself shall be a fellow-banqueter with the glorified saints. They shall *eat and drink at his table*, Luke xxii.

30. *I will drink it new with you*, says Christ, *in my Father's kingdom*, Mat. xxvi. 29. 5. *A durable and perpetual feast*. It

shall last for ever: for a fresh course shall be continually served

up. *At thy right hand*, says the Psalmist, *there are pleasures for ever*

more, Psal. xvi. 11. There are rivers of pleasures, always fresh,

always full, and always flowing. There shall be no end of

that heavenly banquet; that table shall never be drawn; and

such as are once set down at it shall never rise again.

We see then what a feast the feast of glory shall be, tho' in-

deed it is unspeakable and inconceivable. All the refreshing ex-

periences of the love and grace of GOD that the saints have in

this life, are but a taste in comparison of what they shall have in

heaven: yet these experiences are sometimes so sweet, refreshing

and satisfying, that they are inexpressible; the saints cannot

make language of them. O then! what must the full fruition

be! Therefore all we get here should not stanch our longing,

but rather sharpen our appetite for the full feast of glory.

(3) *Great honour and dignity*. 'Tis no small honour done to

servants, when their Lord and Master sets them down to meat, at

a well furnished table, yea, at his own table. O the inexpressible

honour that shall be done to them, and put upon them, that

shall be found ready at Christ's coming! There are in scripture

various metaphorical expressions of the great honour and digni-

ty to which the saints shall be advanced in heaven; as *setting*

them on thrones, Luke xxii. 30. yea, on *Christ's throne*, Rev. iii.

21. making them *rulers*, Rev. ii. 10. giving them crowns, and a

kingdom, Mat. xxv. 23. The honour of the glorified saints is

such an honour as becomes the great GOD to give; and tho' now

it is under a vail, yet it shall be taken notice of another day; and

it is such an honour, as will be an abundant recompense for

all the disgrace and contempt that is poured on the saints here

by wicked men. 'Tis such an honour, that the kings of the

earth would one day be content to give all their honours and dig-

nities in exchange for it. The Father will honour them. *If*

any man serve me, says Christ, *him will my Father honour*, John xii.

26. And so will Christ: *He shall gird himself, and will come forth,*

and serve them. This brings me to observe here,

2. *How far Christ will interest himself in their happiness.* The expression is indeed wonderful, tho' metaphorical; and imports very admirable grace and condescension on Christ's part: For when he would set forth the common custom among men, he says, *Which of you having a servant plowing, or feeding cattle will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me,* Luke xvii. 7, 8. Masters expect this from their servants; and Christ may well require it of us: Yet, such is his condescension that he will minister to his servants. He was among his disciples *one that served*; and he came not, as other masters, *to be ministered unto, but to minister*, Mat. xx. 28. And how admirable was his condescension, in *girding himself, and washing his disciples feet*, John xiii. 4, 5. Yet, the expression here used is not to be understood, as if Christ did minister to the glorified saints in any servile way: for, as that is not suitable to his glorified state, so heaven's happiness is not of that nature as to admit of it. But the expression may import these things, 1. *That nothing shall be wanting in him to promote and perpetuate their happiness.* Tho' he shall not exercise any part of his mediatory office after the judgment of the great day; yet he will be wanting in nothing suitable to his glorious person, after the consummation of all things; and the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father. Even then, he is still true G O D, and true M a n; and as he is dear to the Father, so his saints are dear to him: therefore he will surely employ all his power and interest to compleat their blessedness and happiness. 2. *That they shall share of his own happiness, according to their capacity.* He will make them partakers of these same joys and pleasures for substance, that he hath as the recompense of his service and sufferings. They shall *enter into his Joy*, Mat. xxv. 23.; *sit on his throne*, Rev. iii. 21.; *eat and drink at his table*, Luke xxii. 30.; *reign with him*, 2 Tim. ii. 12.; and *be glorified with him*, Rom. viii. 17. Christ's presence in heaven shall not eclipse, but perfect the glory and happiness of his faithful servants. 3. *That they shall enjoy this happiness as a fruit of his mediation.* And this will indeed render it the more sweet, refreshing and satisfying to them, and it will be in heaven a pleasant reflection to them, to think, that

this happiness is come to them through his blood, by his procurement as the Father's servant in the work of redemption. His will accent their songs and praises in heaven. We read of the saints, that they sung *the song of the Lamb*; and that they sang a new song, saying, *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us* GOD by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our GOD, kings and priests, Rev. xv. 3. and v. 9, 10. And the glorious angels join, in v. 12, saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* 'Tis true, as this last is the song of the angels, so the former is the song of the redeemed in the church militant on earth; yet it shews what will be their song in heaven: for they do but begin that song now, which they shall be singing in glory.

I should now proceed to the application of this doctrine, but cannot at this time enter upon it. Only we may see here, what great encouragement we have to serious and earnest preparation for the second coming of Christ. If we wait and watch for his coming, having our *loins girt about*, and our *light burning*, then his coming will be joyful and comfortable to us. Their blessedness and happiness is inexpressible and unconceivable, who shall be found ready when he comes. But if you please yourselves with a fair outward profession, without an inward principle of grace; and with a form of godliness, without the power of it: If ye indulge yourselves in carnal delights, or in ease and sloth, in sloth and security; then his coming will be a dreadful surprize to you, and that day will be very terrible. Therefore, let us shake off sloth and laziness, and rouse up ourselves, for our Great Lord and Master who is now gone to heaven, hath left us much work to do; and he will come again to count and reckon with us. Therefore, let us *gird up the loins of our minds*, and study to be always in a prompt and ready disposition for our Master's work. Let us look to it that our *lights be burning*; that we have grace and grace in a lively exercise, that we may shine as *lights in the world*: And let us thus wait and watch continually for his coming. *O blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing*, Mat. xxiv. 46. I shall read

read to you two texts of scripture, which I recommend; together with my text, to your deep meditation in private. One in Mark xiii. 32,---37. *But of that day, and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch: Watch ye therefore, (for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh at even, or at midnight or at the cock crowing, or in the morning) Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.* The other text is the latter part of the Parable of the Ten Virgins, in Matth. xxv. 5,---13. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered, and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch ye therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh.* Let me obtest you not to satisfy yourselves with an empty profession of Christianity, tho' never so glorious for, as meteors are soon spent, so the lamps of profession are soon extinguished, when there is no oil of grace to feed them. Therefore, make ready. Get oil in your vessels with your lamps, and keep your lamps burning. O happy they who shall be found ready when the Bridegroom cometh! For they shall enter with him to the marriage; i. e. He will receive them into the joys of heaven, and admit them to immediate and eternal communion with himself. But dreadful will their condition be, whom the Bridegroom's coming shall surprize in an unprepared state! Their door of grace and mercy shall then be shut upon them; and when they knock, they shall find no access; but be debarred forever from the joys and pleasures of the other world, and cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

S E R M O N V.

After the L O R D's S U P P E R.

ing another SERMON PERSUADING TO PREPARATION
for the second Coming of CHRIST.

Luke xii. 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40.

your Loins be girded about, and your Light burning.

*and ye yourselves like unto Men, that wait for their Lord, when
he will return from the Wedding, that when he cometh and
knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

*Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall
find watching: Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird him-
self, and make them to sit down to Meat, and will come forth,
and serve them.*

*If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch,
and find them so, blessed are these Servants.*

*And this know, that if the Good-man of the House had known what
Hour the Thief would come, he would have watched, and not
have suffered his House to be broken through.*

*Be therefore ready also: For the Son of Man cometh at an Hour
when ye think not.*

Have had occasion to speak to you already from this text,
and proposed this doctrine from it, that *great is their b'ef-*
ests and happiness whose earnest endeavour it is to be always in
readiness for Christ's second coming. I have shewed, that
Christ who is gone to heaven will come again; wherein our
happiness for his coming doth consist; why we should always
be in a readiness for it; and in what respects they are blessed
happy whom Christ when he comes shall find ready
proceed now to the application.

1. For lamentation. Alas, that many are wholly uncon-
cerned about the coming of Christ, and careless whether they
be ready or not! I fear that too many of you, that hear me,

L

put

put off the thoughts of his coming, and live merrily and quietly in a careless and unprepared state. Many take occasion from Christ's long tarrying, to set the day of his coming at a great distance in their own thoughts, and so indulge themselves in security and wickedness: Like that *evil servant*, who said in his heart, *My lord delayeth his coming*; and so began to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, Mat. xx. 48, 49. Some of you have a fair outward profession, and talk much of religion; but, alas! ye please yourselves with fine talk and discourse, while ye are loose and careless in your practice. Others of you are outwardly blameless in your lives, and seemingly diligent in duty, and profess to wait for the coming of Christ; yea, it may be, are confident that all shall go well with you, when the Bridegroom cometh, as the foolish virgins were. But, alas! ye are wholly strangers to a work of saving grace upon your hearts. Ye have lamps, but have no oil in your vessels: a shining profession, but no principle of grace to maintain it, and to keep your light burning. You have, it may be, your good modes and fits of devotion; a little warmth of affection now and then, at a sermon, or a communion: but these fits are soon over; so that your *goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew it goeth away*, Hos. vi. 4. Alas! how many slothful professors are there, who snort upon a bed of laziness and security under a clear gospel-light? A form is easily maintained, and vanishing affections are soon stirred: but serious preparation for the coming of Christ will cost men labour and diligence; and many are so much in love with their carnal ease, that they cannot be at pains.

But, Oh! Consider how dreadful your condition is like to be when ye are called to meet Christ at his coming. O take heed that it do not fare with you, as with the foolish virgins! Who such as were ready went in with the Bridegroom to the marriage, the door was shut upon them, and they were excluded tho' they were earnest to be admitted. How terrible will the coming be to you, if you are not ready? Ye who despise the still and calm voice of the gospel, what will ye do when ye hear the dreadful sound of the last trumpet, which shall be an alarm to eternal vengeance? O sinners, let your hearts tremble at the thoughts of these things. If you tremble not, you

worse than Felix, a poor Pagan, who trembled when Paul discoursed to him of a judgment to come, Acts xxiv. 25. Yea, ye are in this worse than devils, for they *believe and tremble*, James ii. 19.

Secondly, Alas, that even the children of GOD, such as have the truth of grace in them, are, for the most part, so slack and careless in preparing and making ready for the coming of Christ. O dear Christians, are ye ready to meet the Bridegroom? Alas, no! ye may be more unready than you were some years ago. Some of you would not for all the world be called to meet him in your present frame and posture. Alas! your loins are not girt about, your light burning. There is not that promptness and readiness of disposition for the work and service of Christ, that sometimes there hath been. And your light burns dim; the love of GOD in you is at a low pass, like a little fire beneath the ashes. You do not rouse up yourselves, but indulge your sloth and laziness in a great measure; and are secure and careless, in respect of what ye were wont to be.

But consider, how sad this is. For 1. Hence it is that there is so great an unwillingness to die; and that ye cannot entertain serious thoughts of Christ's coming, without fear and trembling. Hence also are all your afflictions. GOD is fain to use the iron rods to rouse and awaken your secure and lazy souls, when ye fall a sleeping and slumbering, your awakening is like to be sad: for, as GOD sent a tempest after Jonah, so he usually finds out some sharp rod to scourge drowsy saints to their duty. 3. Ye know not how sudden and surprising Christ's coming may be to you. How suddenly may the cry be railed, *Behold the Bridegroom cometh?* And what a hurry may ye be in, what fears may seize your soul, if ye are not ready? How will it be, if, like the virgins, ye shall be found sleeping and slumbering, just when the Bridegroom is coming?

Use 2. For exhortation. Make it your earnest endeavour to be always in a readiness for Christ's coming to you, whether at death or judgment. *Let your loins be girt about, and your light burning; wait for your Lord, and watch for his coming.* I have already opened the nature of these duties, and shewed you what is implied in them: but let me now urge them upon you.

See that your loins be girt about. You have chosen Christ

for your Master, and have solemnly bound yourselves to be his servants. You have engaged and covenanted to be his; and many of you have lately sealed this engagement at the Lord's table. Now, the service that Christ requires of you, though most pleatant and honourable, yet is great and weighty service such as requires the united strength of all your powers and faculties. I heretore, as the LORD calls to Job once and again *gird up now thy loins like a man*, Job xxxviii. 3. and xl. 7.; do I call to you, gird up your loins, and buckle to your work. Shake off sloth and security, and rouze up yourselves: Gather in the strength of your souls to your work: Call in all the powers and faculties of your souls to attend on your Master's business: Call in your hearts, and hold them in: Gird your thoughts and affections together that they may not gad abroad. And arm yourselves with resolution and fortitude of mind, that your Master's work and service may be performed vigorously, earnestly, and resolutely. No grace can be exercised, nor any duty performed by a soul that is ungirded. Hence the apostle exhorts, *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind*, 1 Pet. i. 13. And then it follows, *Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. Gird, and be sober; gird, and hope to the end. So, gird, and act faith; gird, and act love vigorously: Gird yourselves, and pray; gird yourselves, and hear the word. Here that is true *ungirded and unblest*. When your affections are scattered, so that you have too many things to fear, or too many things to love, or too many things to care for; then you cannot serve the LORD with vigour and intention of mind. But when the strength of your soul is gathered in and girded together, then are ye in a prompt and ready disposition for every duty. So if you complain of your non-proficiency in religion, and if you meet with many impediments and hinderances in your work, but the great hinderance is, that your loins are not girded, your hearts not united in your work, nor intent upon it. Hence it is that there is so much loose praying, loose hearing, loose communicating, and loose walking. Therefore, gird your loins with strength.

For this end, labour to have your hearts deeply impressed with a sense of the great weight and importance of your work.

servants to Christ, and of the many difficulties and impediments in your way; and with such a sense of the evidence and consequence of the great things of eternity, as may command your whole soul after them. "The serving, pleasing and glorifying GOD, the saving mine own soul; this is all I have to mind; this is the great work I have to do: No matter what become of the interests and concerns of this present life, if my salvation-work go on. If this work be not done, then I am eternally undone: but if this work be done, I am made forever." Therefore, gird up thy loins, and come away. Cry with the Psalmist, *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, Ps lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to love, serve and obey thee.* Be earnest with GOD to gird the strength of your soul together.

2. *Let your light be burning.* Labour to have your graces always in a lively exercise. Two things here I exhort you to.

(1.) See that your light be fed with oil. You have a shining profession; but see that there be an inward principle of grace, *the oil in the vessel*, to feed the flame. Alas! many of you deceive yourselves with the blaze of an outward profession, without an inward work of grace upon your heart. But, when the bridegroom cometh, your lamps will be gone out, if there be no oil to feed them. Without an inward principle of grace, the best and most glorious profession will fail you when you have most to do; and all your vain hopes and false peace, grounded upon your outward profession and formal duties, will at last leave you ashamed. For *the hypocrite's hope shall perish; and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost* John viii. 13. and xi. 10. At least, it shall be so at death; For *what is the hope of the hypocrite, tho' he hath gained, when GOD taketh away his soul?* Job xxvii. 8. Therefore, as you love your souls, do not satisfy yourselves with an external profession, or your having the reputation of good people: and do not rest on common grace; something that resembles true grace, and is very like it, but is a shadow of it. But labour to get an inward principle of grace, a principle of spiritual life in your souls. This is like oil in the vessel, to keep your light burning. If once ye get this, it will never fail you, but will increase in the pouring out, as the wise man's oil did, 2 Kings iv. That you may get an inward principle of grace, use diligently the ordinances and means of grace,

grace, especially the reading and hearing of the word, meditation and prayer. This is to go to the market and buy; and see that you do so before it be too late. Seek an unction from the holy One. Go to the GOD of all grace, who is able to make all grace abound to you: And seek to him through the blessed Mediator Christ. The prophet had represented to him in a vision *two olive-trees, and two olive-branches, which, through two golden-pipes, emptied the golden-oil out of themselves into the golden candlestick*, Zech. iv. 11, 12. The plain meaning seems to be this, that the golden oil of grace is communicated from Christ the olive-tree, by the spirit the olive-branch, thro' the ordinances the golden pipes, into the golden candlestick of the church; i. e. into the hearts of believers, to make their lamps to burn. Therefore bring your empty vessels to Christ the olive-tree, that they may be filled with the golden oil of grace. See to GOD through Christ in the use of his own ordinances.

2. *See that your light burn bright, and that your oil keep your lamp burning.* Labour to have grace so lively in its exercise, that it may influence all the parts of your conversation. Let grace be visible and conspicuous in your life, that your path may be as the shining light, Prov. iv. 18. To this purpose our blessed Saviour exhorts, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 16. Agreeable whereunto is that of the apostle *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of GOD, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*, Phil. ii. 15. If your light shine bright, labour to preserve it so. Let grace be kept in constant exercise, and make serious godliness your chief work and study, and take heed of what may obscure your light. Quench not the spirit by carnal delights, or careless neglects of duty, or a customary performance of them. If your light be dim, clear it up. We read of the *Virgins trimming their lamps*: Mat xxv. 7. Stir up the grace of GOD that is in you; and make this your daily practice. The lamps of the sanctuary were to be dressed and trimmed every morning, Exod xxx. 7. Labour to remove the filth and dross of sin that chokes your light, by the daily renewed exercise of repentance, and faith in Christ. Renew your resolutions for duty, and clois walking with GOD: and seek

OD thro' Christ daily for fresh supplies of grace, that your
ht die not for want of oil.

3. *Wait for the Lord.* Look and long for his coming, and
ve it to him to moderate his own pace, and to come in his
n time. See that ye do not faint or weary.

Consider, 1. *The Old Testament saints waited for his first coming.*
cob, when dying, cries out, *I have waited for thy salvation, O*
RD, Gen. xlix. 18. And 'tis said of old Simeon, that he
s waiting for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25, 38. and of
e people of GOD at that time, that they looked for redemption
Jerusalem. Therefore New Testament saints should be wait-
g for his second coming. For as the promise of Christ's first
ming, was the great promise under the Old Testament; so the
omise of his second coming, is the great promise under the New.

This is *the proper character of gracious persons.* Hence they
described by this, that they look for him, Heb. ix. 28. And
e apostle Paul speaks of it, as a fruit of conversion: *Ye turned*
GOD from idols, says he, to serve the living and true GOD, and
wait for his Son from heaven, 1 Thess. i. 9, 10. Ye have not
e character of true saints, if ye are not looking and waiting
r Christ's coming. 3. *Your relation to Christ requires this.* Ye
e his servants; and shall not servants wait for their Lord and
aster? Again, He is your high Priest, and ye are his people.
hen the high Priest entered into the Holy of holy's, the people
ited without, till he should come out and solemnly bless them:
Christ, our great high Priest, having entred within the veil
the heavenly sanctuary, we are to wait for him, when he will
me out again to bless us with everlasting blessings. 4. *Wait-*
g for Christ hath great advantages for the present. It will quick-
you to diligence in your Christian-work. *Wherefore, says the*
ostle, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may
found of him in peace without spot, and blameless, 2 Pet. iii. 14.
hen men weary of waiting, this destroys all religion; as we
in that wicked servant, who said, *My Lord delayeth his coming;*
d so began to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with
drunken, Mat. xxiv. 48, 49. And waiting and looking for
rist will beget an heavenly temper and walk. *Our conversa-*
is in heaven, says the apostle, from whence also we look for the
aviour the Lord Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 20. 5. Wait for Christ,
and

and ye shall not wait in vain. *Blessed are all they that wait for him: and they shall not be ashamed that wait for him, Isa. xxx. 18. and xlix. 23.* Your waiting for Christ shall at last come to a blessed and happy account for your own souls: for *unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation, Heb. ix. 28.* If ye look and wait for him, then may ye expect his salvation.

Well then, wait for your Lord continually. And for this end be much in prayer for the assistance of divine grace. The apostle prays for the Thessalonians, *The LORD direct your hearts unto the love of GOD, and unto the patient waiting for Christ, 2 Thess. iii. 5.* Ye cannot attain to this patient waiting without divine direction. The best of men are oft-times so little affected with the thoughts of Christ's coming, and so slack and remiss in their preparation for it, that they need the assistance and influence of divine directing grace. And there are many intervening clouds between us and that day, such clouds as darken our sight, and obscure our faith, that we need to pray earnestly that our eyes may be anointed with spiritual eye-salve that we may get such an affecting sight of Christ's coming, as we saw it with our bodily eyes.

4. *Watch for Christ's coming.* This is a necessary duty incumbent on all Christians. *What I say unto you, says our Lord, say unto all, watch, Mark xiii. 37.* Carnal security is an evil that is incident to all sorts of Christians, young and old. 'Tis incident to young Christians; they have so little experience of the power of sin, of the prevalency of temptations, and of their own weakness, that they are apt to grow self-confident, and to trust in their own good resolutions; and so, remitting of their spiritual watchfulness, are oft-times wofully ensnared. 'Tis incident to old experienced Christians, Noah, Lot, David, and other saints, were surprized with fearful temptations, and carried to gross sins, even when they were old, and after many experiences of the love and grace of GOD. The wise virgins did not sleep, till their main work was, in a great measure, over. 'Tis said to the commendation of King Jehoshaphat, *That he walked in the first ways of his father David, 2 Cor. xvii. 3.* It seems that David's first ways were his best ways. Alas! there are few Christians whose last days are their best days.

that carnal security is incident to all sorts of Christians : 'tis incident to them even after solemn duties, and after special manifestations of GOD unto them. We see this in Christ's disciples. They had been partaking of both sacraments, of the old and New Testament, the passover, and the Lord's supper ; Christ himself being the administrator, I doubt not there were special measures of the divine presence on that occasion : soon after, even that same night, when they had gone out into the garden, they could not watch with Christ one hour, no more the best among them ; they fell asleep again and again ; their bodily sleep, in such a season, did sadly bewray the weakness of their souls. Now, many of you have of late been at the Lord's table, drawing near to GOD in a most solemn ordinance : and some of you have, it may be, had special manifestations of GOD, and rich and sweet experiences of his love and presence in the use of that ordinance. Yet your danger is great. Satan is ready to lay your soul asleep, and ye have ill hearts that are much inclined to spiritual sleeping and slumbering : so that ye need to take heed to yourselves. Some sad temptation may be at hand. Watch against spiritual pride and self-conceit, and against spiritual sloth and laziness. Watch, lest the subtilty of Satan, and the deceits of your own hearts, rob you of the fruit and benefit of duties and ordinances, and particularly of that ordinance of the Lord's supper. And watch continually. The lamp in the tabernacle was to *burn always*, Exod. xxvii. viz. in the night season ; for Aaron was to *light the lamps every evening*, Exod. xxx. 8. And what is our whole life in this world, but a dark night of temptation, wherein our candle should never go out ? When ye put your danger farthest off, it is nearest at hand.

Consider, 1. *Who bids you watch.* 'Tis your blessed Lord and Saviour. 'Tis the great Captain of salvation that gives this word of command, *I say unto all, watch*. And he knows your danger better than ye do. 2. *Your watching will be of great advantage.* He that bids you watch, will surely bless it with success. 'Tis a mean of strengthening small remainders of grace. *Watchful*, says Christ, *and strengthen the things that remain, that ye are ready to die*, Rev. iii. 2. And 'tis a blessed mean of preventing much evil and mischief to the soul. *Watch and pray*,

says our Lord, *that ye enter not into temptation*, Mat. xxvi. The watchful Christian avoids many evils that others are surprized with. 3. *There is great danger in not watching*. When ye are off your watch, ye may suddenly be surprized with fearful temptations; so that your not watching one hour may keep you walking many an hour on a very uncomfortable occasion. And O what a sad surprisal may Christ's coming be to you, if you do not watch! Ponder what Christ saith to the church of Sardis; *If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*, Rev. iii. 3. And all the world cannot tell how many evils ye are liable unto at Christ's coming on you.

Well then, watch for Christ's coming. Watch against whatever may unfit you for meeting with him; and watch continually, till he come. For this end, 1. I recommend much fear. Fear keeps men awake. That sentinel that stands in fear lest an enemy come upon him, will not easily fall asleep. So here, fear lest Christ's coming surprize you, *Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping*. Keep up a fearful apprehension of your danger, by reason of the power of sin, the prevalence of temptations, and your own weakness. And ponder the many sad experiences ye have had of these things, even after solemn vowing and covenanting. O what reason have we to walk in fear! And *happy is the man that feareth alway*, Prov. xxix. 14. 2. Use *awakening and rousing meditations*. That man does not easily sleep who is thoughtful on something of weight and importance. Think of heaven and hell, of death and a judgment to come. Think of the second coming of Christ, the glory of his coming, and the end of his coming; and how it will like to fare with you on that day: and think, if ye fall asleep, what sad awakenings ye may meet with from the Lord. Let your thoughts of these things be frequent, deep and ponderous. 3. Study *sobriety in the use of all lawful things*. Watchfulness and sobriety are often joined together. *Let us not sleep, as do others*, says the apostle Paul; *but let us watch and be sober*, 1 Thess. 5. 6. And says the apostle Peter, *The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer*, 1 Pet. iv. 7. Unless ye be sober, ye cannot watch. Be sober therefore in the use of meat and drink, and of all lawful delights and comforts.

in your affection unto, and cares about worldly things. To purpose our Lord cautions his disciples. *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.* Luke xxi. 34. 4. Be frequent in prayer. Watchfulness and prayer are also often joined. *Watch and pray,* says Saviour, *that ye enter not into temptation,* Mat. xxvi. 41. *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the Lord is,* Mark xiii. 33. They are indeed sweet companions. Let GOD watch your heart, all your watching will be in vain. Therefore ye need to pray earnestly that he would watch over your watching. Call in the assistance of divine grace. Get and maintain a deep and lively sense of Christ's second coming. 'Tis said of the Virgins, *While the Bridegroom tarried, all slumbered and slept,* Mat. xxv. 5. They thought he tarried, and put off the thoughts of his coming, and so fell asleep. Therefore be often thinking of his coming, and think of it as at hand. Thus, labour to have the sense of his coming to and lively upon your heart.

Having thus endeavoured to press the duties of preparation required in my text, I shall in prosecuting this use of the text go any further.

Propose some things by way of Motive, to excite and engage you to make it your great business to be always ready for Christ's second coming.

Shew you how this work must be gone about.

Give a few directions for this end.

First To quicken you to earnest endeavours to be always ready for the coming of Christ, I propose these Considerations.

Consider who comes. 'Tis the Lord Jesus Christ. And is it not necessary for his honour that ye should be ready? What Master, having gone abroad, will not reckon himself affronted by his servants, if upon his return with great solemnity, he find them idle, slothful, gadding abroad, eating and drinking with the drunken, so that he is not attended and waited on? On the other hand, will he not reckon himself honoured by them, if he find them busy at work, waiting for his coming, ready at his call, that when he knocks they may open to him immediately? Therefore, Christ is our Lord and master: and who is so great and

glorious a master as he is? Surely, our preparation should be such as may be answerable to the glory and dignity of so great a master.

2. Consider *the manner of his coming*. O how glorious it will be. He comes *in power and great glory*, Mat. xxiv. 30. If you were called to meet some great king, riding in great pomp and state, what preparation would you make? And ought you not more to make ready to meet the great King of kings coming to receive all the glory of the upper and better world? He comes, not in the days of his flesh, *in the form of a servant*, but in the glory of his Father: attended, not by a few squire-men, but by a glorious retinue of innumerable angels; riding, not upon an ass, but upon the clouds of heaven; and environed with flaming fire. Surely the glory of his coming should greatly influence your preparation.

3. Consider *the end of his coming*. He comes to take account how you have behaved during his absence, and how you have managed the trust committed to you. So, 'tis said in the *Parable of the Talents*, *After a long time, the Lord of these servants cometh, and reckoneth with them*, Mat. xxv. 19. And, says the apostle, *Every one of us shall give account of himself to GOD*, Rom. xiv. 12. The account will be so strict, so particular, so impartial, that we should all tremble at the thoughts of it and do our utmost to have our accounts ready. Having a reckoning to make up, and such a reckoning as that shall be, we should have our accounts ready stated and balanced. It will be your last and last account; he comes to count and reckon with you for all: therefore if your accounts be not ready then, they never be ready; for there will be no more trial after that. You know not how little time you may have to get your accounts in readiness: therefore ye should be always ready.

4. Consider *that this is the end of all the ordinances*, especially the word and sacrament. They are appointed for promoting and furthering our preparation work for the second coming of Christ. Therefore, in the word, there are so many warnings and advertisements given of his coming, so many calls to be ready, so many directions given for that end, and so many pressing arguments and motives to quicken our preparation. So also is the end of the sacrament of the supper. We come

the sacrament to get our hearts more deeply impressed with a sense of Christ's coming: therefore in the sacrament we are put in mind of his coming; and the bread and wine there is given us as a pledge of his coming: *As often*, says the apostle, *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*. Again, We come to the sacrament to get our loins girded about, our spiritual strength and vigour gathered in and girded together, and to get a prompt and ready disposition for our master's work: and we come to *trim our lamps*, that our lights may burn bright; to get our graces quickened to a more lively exercise, that they may influence all the parts of our conversation. Now, this being the end of these ordinances, therefore, unless we improve them this way, we hear and communicate in vain.

5. Consider, *whether ready or unready we must all meet Christ at his coming*. Meet him we must. This cannot be avoided. When the cry is made, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*; when the first trumpet shall sound, all shall go forth to meet him, whatever their state and condition be. And is it nothing to you whether ye are ready to meet him, or not? Surely this is the great business you have to do, and that should take up your care and thoughts more than any thing else. O it will be a doleful meeting, if ye be not ready.

6. Consider *the great misery of such as are not ready at Christ's coming*. They shall be excluded from the happiness above, and the door of grace and mercy shall be for ever shut upon them. 'Tis said in the Parable of the Virgins, *afterward (that is, when the door was shut) came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us*. But he answered, and said, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not*, Mat. xxv. 11, 12. And to the same purpose our blest Lord speaks elsewhere, *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are*. When shall ye begin to say, *We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*. But he shall say, *I tell you, I know you not whence you are: Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*, Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. This life is the only time for preparation for Christ's second coming. When this life is ended, your time for preparation ends with it. This life is the only

ly time for labour and service : this is your day : when death cometh, then *the night cometh, when no man can work*, Job ix. 4. If Christ's coming, whether at death or judgment, surprize you in an unprepared state, you are undone for evermore : and in your misery and extremity you will be forced to flee to him, and to cry, *Lord, Lord*. Oh ! how fain would ye own him then, and be owned by him ; gladly would ye enter into the marriage into the joys of heaven : but your desires and fears then will be all too late ; for when your day of grace and trial is once over, it will be utterly impossible to get your condition altered.

7. Consider *the great happiness of being ready when Christ comes*. When your work is done, and your ornaments put on, when *your loins are girt about, and your lights burning* : when ye stand in a ready posture, then may ye with comfort and pleasure think of the coming of Christ. Then may ye say with old Simeon, *LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*, Luke i. 29. And with Paul, when he was drawing near to death, *am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*. 2 Tim iv. 6, 7, 8. If Christ when he comes shall find you ready, this will yield you unspeakable comfort and holy boldness. *When he shall appear, you shall have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming*, 1 John ii. 28. If he find you ready, you shall enter in with him to the marriage, Mat xxv. 10. to the joys of heaven, and be admitted to eternal and uninterrupted communion with him in glory. Let it therefore be your great business to be always in a readiness for Christ's second coming.

Secondly, I proceed to shew you, *how this work must be gone about*. And,

1. Be speedy in your preparation, and begin timely. The work is great, and the time short ; and 'tis a most necessary work, therefore ye should make it sure, and put it out of doubt and hazard. Time and opportunity for it may be soon gone. Ye cannot begin too soon ; but you may defer too long. Observe heed that ye be not like the *foolish virgins*, who had oil to sell when it was out of time, and came when *the door was shut*. Tho' it may be many years ere the day of Christ's second

ing, yet your time for preparation may be almost spent. Christ's coming to you at death may be at hand; and between that and his coming to judgment there will be no time for preparation; for *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whether thou goest*, Eccl. ix. 10. Therefore speedily to work, lest you be surprized before you are ready. O! what fear and perplexity, what disquiet and confusion may there be at death, when you see your day spent, and your work yet begun, and sore diseases and pains oppressing your body and natural spirits, so that you are in no case for any thing that is good? O! how sad will it be, when you see hell open for you, and GOD far from you, and yourselves unfit for doing any thing for your precious souls? Again, Though you had an assurance of time and days, yet the sooner you begin to make ready for Christ's coming, so much the better; you will have the more experience of his love and grace, and the more hope of joy and comfort at his coming. When once you begin to taste the sweetness and comfort of it, it will be matter of grief to you that you began no sooner.

2. Be *serious and thorough* in your preparation. O take heed of being slight in it. 'Tis not so easy to be ready for Christ's coming as many do imagine. 'Tis quite another thing than many professors of religion take it to be. Some may be *not far from the kingdom of GOD*, Mark xii. 34, and yet never enter in: they may *seek to enter in*, and yet *not be able*, Luke xiii. 24, 26. They may come knocking, as it were, at heaven's gates, and yet get no entrance. Men may think they are ready, and die with this persuasion, and yet be found unready when Christ comes. Men may go a great length, and yet come short of a thorough preparation. They may have a fair outward profession, and yet no inward principle of grace. They may have gifts, but no oil with them, Mat. xxv. 3. They may have seeming grace, counterfeit grace, the shadow and picture of grace, but not the thing itself. Men may have some sudden transient motions of affection, without a gracious change of heart, Mat. xiii. 20. Some superficial tastes of a sweetness of religion, but no gracious experiences; a love and liking of religion, and yet never be brought under the power of it, Heb. vi. 4, 5. They may have good desires and wishes, and yet never obtain, being slothful

slothful and lazy. Consider, I pray you, what is required to
 thorough preparation, and see to it that you do not come short.
 Those things are necessarily required, 1. See to it that Christ
 be indeed your Lord and Master. Where will you find such a
 Master as he is? He is an infinitely *great* and *good* MASTER
 so that it is both your honour and your happiness to be his
 servants. His service is the most honourable, the most profit-
 able, the most pleasant, and the most easy service. He is such
 a good Master that he will not be served for nought; and his
 ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace; his
 yoke is easy, and his burden light; his commands are not griev-
 ous; and he is such a good Master that he is ready to pardon
 failings and infirmities in his honest servants, and to spare them
 as a man spareth his only son that serveth him; he is willing
 to accept of sincere, though weak, minsters at his service; yea,
 he will accept the will for the deed, when his servants can do no more.
 O he is a *good* MASTER! Come and try him, and ye shall
 surely find him *good*, beyond what can be expressed or com-
 ceived. But, how shall we get Christ for our Master? Get
 up with all other lords and masters, the devil, the world, and
 the flesh. Ye must quit your old master, else Christ will not
 be your Master; for you cannot serve such contrary masters.
 Make choice of Christ for your Master; for he will not be
 your's, but by your own choice: Therefore *choose you the*
LORD to serve him, Joshua xxiv. 22. Give yourselves
 him to be his servants. *Join yourselves to the LORD, to serve*
him, Isaiah lvi. 6. Make an intire and hearty resignation
 yourselves to him, to be wholly and forever *his*; and resign
 yourselves to his whole will in all things, being ready for any
 piece of service he may call you to. Thus, close with Christ
 and see to it that you close with him in all his mediatory offices.
 At what time you take him for your Lord and Master, you must
 also take him for your Saviour and Redeemer, being willing to
 be saved by him in his own way. You must be heartily willing
 and content that he save you from your sins, as well as from
 wrath; and that he save you from all your sins, without any
 secret reservation. And you must take him for your only Sa-
 our, renouncing all ground of confidence in yourselves, 2. Ma-
 ke it your business to be *duly fitted and made meet* for service.

1. Seek to be sanctified by his spirit; to have your souls
 washed and washen from filthiness, and furnished and adorned
 with the graces of the holy Spirit, that you may be *vessels meet*
 for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work, 2 Tim.
 2. Get a principle of grace in your hearts, without which
 you are not fit for any service to Christ, or to meet him at his
 coming. If you have no oil of grace in your hearts, when the
 bridegroom cometh, your lamps will be gone out. 3. Be dili-
 gent, active and laborious in your Master's work. Christ hath
 given you much work to do; and he comes in the great day to
 reckon with you, how you have employed yourselves in the
 work he hath given you to do. Therefore rouze up yourselves,
 and apply your work hard. To this purpose the apostle Peter
 writeth; *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what*
manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godli-
ness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of GOD,
 Peter iii. 11, 12. And he adds, verse 14. *Wherefore, beloved,*
knowing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be
found of him in peace without spot, and blameless. Employ your-
 selves in Christ's service with holy vigour and intention of mind,
 with holy zeal and fervour of spirit. *Not slothful in business,*
 the apostle, *servant in spirit; serving the LORD,* Romans
 12. And serve him *instantly,* Acts xxvi. 7.; i. e. with the
 utmost extension of your strength. Your service to him must
 be full of life and vigour. Your loins must be girt about, and
 your light burning.
 4. Be constant and instant in your preparation. Our whole
 life is given us, chiefly for this end, that we may make ready
 for Christ's coming. This is the great business we have to do.
 The time we spend is worse than lost, that is not employed
 with an eye to this. Christ may come and reckon with you in
 your hour when he is not expected: And will it not be sad, if
 he find you sleeping? Death doth not always
 give warning: It comes sometimes by way of surprise. There-
 fore it is good to be always ready. What if your master should
 come and find you idle? As worthy Calvin said to his friend.
 It is not enough to get ready, but ye must keep ready: Ye must
 have your loins girded about, and your light burning; that
 you may have nothing to do, but to wait that happy hour, and

to welcome the Lord Jesus at his coming. Yea, none are ready, but they may be more ready: Therefore ye need to be still at work. What a happiness is it to live so every day, as we were presently to appear before the tribunal of Christ? Not only your own necessity, but also your love to Christ, and your earnest desire of his coming should make you to be always looking out for it, and studying to be always in a readiness to meet him.

Thirdly, I shall conclude this doctrine by giving some directions, *What to do that your hearts may be quickened to diligence in preparation*, that you may be always in a readiness for Christ's coming.

1. *Labour to be firmly established in the faith of his coming.* Take heed that you be not of that black number, who either deny it, or doubt of it, or scoff at it, saying, *Where is the promise of his coming?* 1 Peter 3. 4. Prophane men would gladly shake off this bridle and restraint upon their lusts. Beware of this, and take heed of secret whispers of Atheism and unbelief, that may be Christ will never come; or, what if this never be? Many look on the doctrine of Christ's second coming as a mere forgery, to keep the world in awe. But what! doth the great GOD stand in need of a lie to keep men in good order? Can it be imagined, that GOD should make a world that he cannot govern but by fictions and forgeries? No, it cannot. Therefore believe his coming. Labour to have your faith more confirmed and strengthened, that you may be firmly persuaded of the truth of it, as if you saw it with your bodily eyes. Christ hath promised it: Yea, this is the great promise made to the church in all ages. In the word there are many warnings and advertisements given of his coming: and the sacrament is a pledge of it; For *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*, 1 Cor. 11. Therefore, improve the sacrament for the confirmation of your faith. In the Lord's Supper the bread and wine were given you as a pledge of his coming, to confirm and strengthen your faith, and to revive and raise up your hopes of his coming, that you may look and long for him. Surely, if men had such firm belief of this as they have of other things, it would awaken and rouse their secure and drowsy hearts.

2. Labour to have your hearts taken of a present world, and set on the blessedness to come. This direction our blessed Saviour gives in my context; *Provide yourselves bags, says he, which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Then it follows, *Let your loins be girded about, and your light burning; and ye yourselves be ready unto men that wait for their lord, &c.* Luke xii. 33, 34, 35, 36. If your heart be set on the things of a present world; if your heart be not in heaven, as having your treasure there, you cannot be seriously concerned to have your loins girt about, and your light burning; nor will ye watch or wait for Christ's coming. Therefore sit loose from this world, and all your possessions and enjoyments in it, and set your hearts on the joys and glories of the other world. *Set your affections on things above, says the apostle, not on things on the earth,——And when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory,* Colossians iii. 2, 4. And says our blessed Lord, *lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,——For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,* Matthew vi. 19, 20, 21. When your affections are set on present things, you have then little thought of Christ's coming, or of your going out to meet him; and then no wonder that you neglect to make ready. Therefore, look on all things here below, with an holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with the happiness above; and set your heart on that happiness as your chief treasure: for, according to your choice of your treasure, will be the temper of your mind, and the tenor of your walk. Your desires and pursuits, your cares and fears, your joys and delights, will all be answerable to your choice.

3. Make the thoughts of Christ's coming familiar to you. Be often thinking of it. And in your thoughts and meditations represent it to yourselves as if it were already present. Imagine with yourselves, as if you heard the last trumpet, and saw Christ coming in power and great glory, riding on the clouds of heaven, environed with flaming fire, attended with a glorious retinue of angels and saints, and all nations gathered before him, and yourselves sited before him among the rest. Such deep and frequent thoughts and imaginations, as they will in a

great measure allay the dread and terror of his coming, so they will quicken you to seriousness and diligence in preparation. They will keep your soul awake, lively and diligent. The force of imagination is such, that it makes things at a distance work upon us, as if it were present.

4. *Get high thoughts of Christ.* He is indeed infinitely great and glorious, and will appear so on that day in the view of the world. Now, how high soever your notions be about his coming, yet so long as you entertain lessening thoughts of him you cannot make ready for him. But when you have high and honourable thoughts of Christ, this will make you prepare and make ready accordingly.

5. *Look on his coming as near.* This will hasten your preparation. *Behold I come quickly,* says he, *and my reward is with me,* Rev. xxii. 12. His coming cannot be far off. Time will soon be over. It flies as upon eagles wings, and hastens to an end. Christ hastens his coming, in regard of the quick dispatch of these things that are to precede it. Christ is making haste, making all things ready for his coming. All is going fast forward. The days wherein the apostles lived were *the last times* upon them *the ends of the world had fallen*: and now, Christ's coming is more than 1600 years nearer than it was then. Therefore the judge is just at the door; and *he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Look on Christ as if he had already begun his journey, and were now upon his way, that you may stand ready to meet and welcome him.

6. *Stir up yourselves.* Shake off sloth and laziness, security, deadness and drowsiness of soul. Your conscience is too sleepy, your will too remiss, your affections too cold and dead: therefore, you need to rouse and awaken your souls more and more. Call to your own hearts as the ship master did to Jonah, *What meanest thou? O sleeper!* Chide yourselves for your dulness, deadness and laziness. Use a kind of holy violence with your own hearts. Set the spurs to your sides, and press yourselves on to more seriousness and liveliness, and do not suffer yourselves to jog on in such an easy and lazy way of religion as heretofore you have done.

7. *Depend on GOD through Christ for quickening, upstirring and strengthening influences of grace.* Christ died to purchase quickening

quicken and strengthening grace for his people. He rose again from the dead, that his people might rise and walk in newness of life. He ascended to heaven that he might pour out the quickening and strengthening spirit. *All fulness of grace* treasured up in him; and it is *of his fulness* that all believers receive, Col. i. 19. Therefore, depend on him believingly, for much of that grace which he hath purchased and laid up in him for your use, John i. 16. Remember that *without him you can do nothing*, John xv. 5. All your endeavours to get ready for his coming will come to nothing, without the breathings and influences of his spirit and grace. Therefore, cry with the spouse, *Awake, O north-wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may be sent forth*, Cant. iv. 16.

End of Mr WILLIAM WISHART'S Five SERMONS.



F I V E

S E R M O N S

Preached before and after the

C E L E B R A T I O N

O F T H E

O R D ' s S U P P E R.

Mr W A L T E R D O U G L A S S,
MINISTER of the *Gospel* at L I N T O U N.

S E R M O N I.

Before the L O R D ' s S U P P E R.

D's Gracious Call, and Encouragement to *Repentance*.

J E R E M I A H iii. 22.

*Turn ye backsliding Chrildren, and I will heal your backslidings :
Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our G O D.*

HIS Prophet having, in the name of GOD, reprov'd and threatened the Israelites for their apostacy from GOD, in the preceding chapter ; in this he gives them many gracious invitations and encouragements to repent and return, notwithstanding that their former provocations were very hainous.
Where

Where sin had abounded, G O D was willing that his grace should much more abound. Thus the spirit of G O D, in exciting men to repentance, makes use of such arguments as are proper to work both upon their fear and love: He tries what threatenings will do to frighten them from sin, and what promises will do to allure them to *repentance*. But, not to introduce by way of introduction, the words read contain two general parts. *First*, G O D here calls the *Israelites* to *repentance*. *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*. 2dly, The children of *Israel* return an answer to this gracious call, *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our G O D*. I hope you are all satisfied that you cannot better employ your thoughts on a day of solemn *fasting* and *humiliation*, especially before a *sacrament*, than in a serious meditation on the subject-matter of this *text*, which I shall endeavour to open up and apply in its several branches.

In the first branch of the *text* you may consider three things. *First*, The title that G O D gives the people of *Israel*: He calls them *children* and *backsliding children*. 2dly, The duty he calls them to: *Return ye*. 3dly, The encouraging promise that G O D makes use of, to engage this people to return to him: *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*.

Two titles are here given to the people of *Israel*. *First*, G O D calls them *children*; and, 2dly, He calls them *backsliding children*. He calls them *children*. I humbly conceive, upon a four-fold account. *First*. To express his tenderness and compassion towards them. Though he had been threatening them dreadfully, and, in a manner, writing *bitter things* against them; yet he seems loath to execute his *anger* upon them: and would not do it, unless their *impenitent obstinacy* should in a manner force him. He will first try all tender methods to bring them back to their duty; but if these gentle methods will not do out of his tender care of them, and his sincere desire of their welfare, he would find himself obliged to *chastise* them yet more for their sins; that by these means they might be buffeted home. Again, 'Tis no small sign of a parent's tenderness and compassion towards his children, when he corrects them for their faults; according to that observation of Solomon, *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: But he that loveth him, chasteneth*

in betimes, Proverbs xiii. 24. And the apostle observes, that when we endure chastening, GOD dealeth with us, as with sons: that if we be without chastisement; whereof all GOD's children are partakers; then are we bastards, and not sons, Heb. xii. 7. 8. Surely, He calls them *children*, to put them in mind of their parent relation to him. He was their *Father*, and they were his *children*. And this he does to shame them out of their sinful courses. What a shame was it for them who were the children of GOD, to turn aside to idolatry, to serve strange gods, and to wallow in all manner of wickedness, as they had done! to rebel against GOD, and to forsake his commandments, surely it was not to behave themselves towards him, as children towards father. GOD had all along carried towards them like a father, nay, like a kind and indulgent father; and they wanted nothing, so long as they were dutiful to him: but, now for a considerable time they had been far from carrying like his children: They had corrupted themselves, had behaved themselves dishonestly and perversely before him; insomuch that I may allude to what Moses says, *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is the spot of his children: They are a perverse and crooked generation*, Deut. xxxii. 5. Their sins were not sins of infirmity, such as often appear in the best of GOD's children; but, they sinned as if they had no relation to GOD: they sinned like rebels, yea, like rebels, and not like children, not like members of the common-wealth of Israel. All spots are bad; but some spots are worse than others. *Sin spots* are the very worst of spots; yet, even these are not all equally bad. There is a spot which is, and a spot which is not that of GOD's children: and therefore, the apostle Paul cautions the Philippians to take heed of these spots, as they desired to maintain their reputation, as being GOD's children: *That ye may be blameless and harmless, as sons of GOD, without rebuke*, Phil. ii. 15; or (as the Greek word [*amometa*] clearly imports) that ye may be the *spotless* sons of GOD; that is, without such spots as are unsuitable to, inconsistent with your *sonship*. It concerns you that intend to come to the LORD's table, to consider how unsuitably ye have carried to the engagements ye came under the last time ye were partakers of this ordinance; and I am sure, the best of us, if we deal impartially with ourselves in this matter, will find

find manifold causes of humiliation before GOD. 'Tis therefore a very proper exercise, for a *fast day*, when you go home to examine your hearts and lives; and especially, to examine what your behaviour has been, since you were last at the table of the LORD: and I dare say, you will find yourselves under the guilt of *broken vows*. See therefore, that you humble yourselves, and mourn before GOD for these things; as you tender the welfare of your precious and immortal souls; as you would desire peace with GOD, and expect the benefit and comfort of this solemn ordinance.

3dly, GOD calls them *children*, to reprove their *folly*. Children are commonly very foolish in their choice; preferring toys and baubles to things of real worth. This people have been extremely foolish, in preferring the service of the *dung-gods*, of the heathen nations that were round about them, to the service of the *true and living GOD*; even that GOD, who had done so many and so great things both for *them* and their *fathers*. O how *foolish* are the generality of people, who prefer the pleasures of the *world*, and the gratifications of *sense*, to the pleasures of *religion*! This is indeed to act the part of *children*, and to prefer the *shadow* to the *substance*. When I was a child, says the apostle, *I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child*; But when I became a man I put away childish things, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. All that prefer the *world* to their *lusts*, to *religion* and the *service of GOD*, they speak like *children*, they understand like *children*, they think like *children*, and they act like *children*; and we never act *wisely* and *rationaly*, until once we come to have a just notion and taste of *religion*. Hence the *prodigal* is said to *come to himself*, so soon as he became sensible of his *folly*, in squandering away his precious time; in wasting his strength and substance in riotous living; and in gratifying his sensual appetites, Luke xv. And the prophet Isaiah tells us, that they who spend their time and strength in seeking the things of this world, *sell their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not*, Isaiah. lv. 2. And do not they act childish and foolishly who do so?

4thly, He likewise calls them *children*, to reprove their *forward and unruly disposition*, *children* (you know) are sometimes

forward and ungovernable; so were the children of Israel, in many respects. God had taken much pains with them, to bring them under right government; but still they rebelled, and turned aside from his ways. He had engaged them to his service, by doing many and great things for them; by promising to do much more for them; by warning them of the danger of falling; and sometimes by punishing them for their rebellion: but still they revolted, and provoked him to anger against themselves. God never had done so much for a people as he had done for them, and yet they proved stiff-necked and unmanageable continually turning aside from him. What could he do more for his vineyard than he had done? and yet their fruit was the fruit of Sodom, and their grapes the grapes of Gomorrah.

And to apply their case to ourselves: What great things hath the Lord done for his people in these lands, both of old and of late? How many wonderful deliverances has he wrought even for us? and yet alas! the generality of us are as worldly, as carnal, and wicked as ever. This is for a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation. Oh, that we could but once see our deliverances improved to a general reformation! In this case, we might expect to see more glorious days than ever we have seen: but if we are not bettered by these appearances of God for us, we have reason to fear greater judgments than any we have yet met with. Let me therefore beseech you, to sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land; and let every one of you mourn for his own sins, and, presently, turn from them, as you regard your own welfare, or the welfare of these nations. This is a work very proper for a day of humiliation; and I assure you, it will be a good preparative for the Lord's table.

But to proceed; God not only calls them children, but backsliding children: That is, children that had gone far back from where they once had been. There seems at this time to have been a general decay of religion among this people. The ordinances of God's worship were not frequented; they lived not according to the rules of GOD's word; they walked after their own imaginations; they were turned aside unto false and crooked ways; and they were gone a whoring after the gods of the

heathen nations. In a word, they were guilty of a *double backsliding*.

First, They were Backsliders in heart. Their Spirits were not right with GOD, nor were their hearts sound in his statutes. In hopes of worldly pleasure and profit, they forsook GOD and his ways; and would not quit their brutish lusts and passions, tho' GOD had sent his Prophets to them, rising early and warning them, to amend their ways. They refused to be reformed; they rejected his counsel, and *would have none of him*; they cast his words behind their back; and were resolutely set upon their wicked ways. All backsliding begins at the heart. It is the *evil heart of unbelief* that causes us to *depart from the living GOD*, Heb. iii. 12. And there could be no considerable backsliding in the life, if the heart were right with GOD: for then it is that apostasy, and all other sins have their first rise. These people seemed once to have been, even, fond of GOD's ways; but now they were become weary of them, and began to chuse of their own ways. And, now, does it not nearly concern us, to examine our hearts, and see how far we are guilty of this kind of backsliding. And sure I am, if we deal uprightly and impartially in this matter, we will find ourselves deeply guilty before GOD. Perhaps some of you have not gone quite off from GOD's ways, and turned openly profane; but if you examine yourselves, will you not find how like you are to the Israelites of old; who, in *their hearts returned back to Egypt*? Acts vii. 39. Are you not in *your hearts*, at least turned back to your *old lusts*. Many people pretend to be going forward towards the *Heavenly Canaan*, by keeping up a shew and *profession of religion*; and yet, at the same time, they are in their hearts looking back to the world and to their lusts. I doubt not but many of you have often renounced your lusts; try whether you have not ere now begun to look back to them again, as Lot's wife did to Sodom.

Secondly, They were children that had backslidden in their ways, as well as in their hearts: And truly, if once the heart turn back from GOD and from godliness, the practice will soon decline also. This people had forsaken GOD's commandments; they refused to be governed by his laws: They had cast off his yoke, and were turned rebellious; walking after the counsel of the world, and wallowing in all manner of abomination.

and therefore, you will find them elsewhere called *Rulers of*
wisdom, and *people of Gomorrah*, Isaiah i. 10. because of their ex-
 treme wickedness. And how sad was this, that *GOD's own co-*
venanted people should have so far declined from *his ways*; even
 from the way that they themselves had chosen; and solemnly
 bound themselves to walk in, all the days of their lives! They
 forgot all *GOD's* goodness to them, with all their former reso-
 lutions and engagements; yea turned loose and profane. O what
 sad and miserable change was there among them, every way to
 the worse! And as every one of us may, with little difficulty,
 discover many errors in our practice: So it concerns us to hum-
 ilitate ourselves for these, and speedily to amend; for if we conti-
 nue in the practice of *sin*, *habituating* ourselves to that which is
 evil, we may soon find the fatal effects of it. They that have
 been long accustomed to sin, usually shake off the restraints of
 shame and fear: Their consciences are seared; the habits of sin
 are confirmed; it pleads prescription; and 'tis just with *GOD* to
 give up those to their lusts, that have refused to give themselves
 to his grace, but rebel against the call of the gospel. That is
 a remarkable word you have to this purpose, *Can the Ethiopian*
change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do good,
 that are accustomed to do evil, Jer. xiii. 23. It should therefore be
 your work and exercise on this day of fasting, to take a serious
 view of your lives, and to make a diligent enquiry into the state
 of your souls; that ye may know what backslidings ye have
 been guilty of, either in heart or in life: and then to humble
 yourselves for them before *GOD*; weep bitterly over them;
 pray for his establishing grace; renounce all your former errors;
 and come to the Lord's table, to ratify and renew your former
 engagements or resolutions to a holy life.

There were two things in this people's case, that highly ag-
 gravated their sin, in being *backsliding children*; both which are
 taken from the consideration of *GOD's* unquestionable *right*
over them and their service, besides the *right* he had to them in
 common with the rest of mankind, as he was their *Creator*, their
Benefactor and *Preserver*; for, 'tis *He that made us, and not we*
ourselves; 'tis in *Him* we live, move, and have our *Being*; and
 in *Him* we have all our mercies. I say, besides this, *GOD*
 has a double right to the *Israelites*, and to their service. First,
 By

By reason of their *birth*: They were born within the pale of the *Visible Church*; which in scripture is called the *House of GOD*, 1 Tim. iii. 15: So that they were unto *Him* as *servants* born within his *House*; upon which account he only had right to their service. Nor could they desert his service, or engage in another's service, without being guilty of the highest injustice and impiety. To be born in the *Church* or *House of GOD*, is doubtless a special privilege; and we would do well to consider, that if we do not live up to this privilege, divine vengeance shall pursue us to the uttermost; and our punishment shall be far greater than theirs, who were not dignified with such a privilege. Let us therefore count it our peculiar merit that we were born in the *House of GOD*, and let us be careful to walk worthy of so high and valuable a *privilege*.

2dly, GOD had also a right of *redemption* to their service. The *Israelites* were a people whom GOD had *purchased* and *redeemed* of old to himself, that they might be his *peculiar people*, and *separated to his service*. By a *strong hand and stretched out arm, by many temptations, signs and wonders*, Deut. iv. 34 he brought them up from the *land of Egypt*, and delivered them out of the *house of bondage*; upon which account they were under the strictest obligations to *diligence* and *constancy* in his service. Hence you will find him enforcing his laws upon them from this very consideration: And particularly, you will find him ushering in the *decatalogue*, (which is the sum and substance of all his laws) with this remarkable *preface*, *I am the Lord your God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*. Exod. xx. 2. Surely they owed their service to him, unto whom they owed their *freedom*, and which they were by *purchase*. And it must needs be a hainous and provoking crime, to desert the service of him who had redeemed them from a state of *absolute slavery*, and brought them into a state of *glorious freedom*. GOD having loosed their bands, they were doubtless bound to serve and obey him all the days of their lives. And is it any wonder then, if GOD should be exceedingly angry with such a people as this, who had run away from his service, after he had so much obliged them to it? And for them to alienate themselves from the service of GOD, was surely the most hainous degree of *sacrilege*.

So much for the first thing, in the first branch of my text, the title that GOD gave the people of *Israel*: They were *children, and backsliding children*. The second thing to be considered is, The duty they are exhorted to: *Return ye*. But, to whom were they to *return*? Surely it was to GOD only. Sin is a departure from GOD, and *repentance* is a *returning to Him*, where I shall show you, what it is that GOD requires of us, when he requires us to *return to Him*; and then apply what shall be offered on this head. Under this expression then, GOD requires of us these four things.

First, To *forsake* our old ways of *sin* and *rebellion* against him. Without this there can be no *returning* to GOD; for, as no man can walk in two different ways at once, neither can we at once serve GOD and the devil, the world, or our lusts. I suppose none of you will deny, but ye have *departed* from GOD. And 'tis his call to you this day, *O Israel, return unto the LORD thy GOD; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity*, Hosea xiv. 1. Whether lords have had dominion over you, now ye are called to renounce them all, otherwise GOD will not receive you graciously. Are you resolving to sit down at the *Lord's table*? you must first break off from the service of *Satan*: For you cannot drink of the *Cup of the LORD*, and of the *Cup of Devils*; you cannot partake of the *table of the LORD*, and of the *table of devils*, 1 Corinthians x. 11. Resolve therefore, in the strength of grace, that ye will be no more acted by *Satan*, nor comply with his temptations, as ye have done formerly; but *resist* him, and stand in the *faith*. Give a bill of *divorce* this day to all your *lords* and *idols*, and spare neither great nor small of them; especially away with your beloved *lusts*. *Sin* must no more reign in your *mortal bodies*; but you must daily mortifie corruption more and more. Have you not been already too long the workers of *iniquity*? I beseech you therefore, let the time past of your lives suffice you to have wrought the will of the *gentiles*, and believe that it is now high time for you to be minding the concerns of your souls, and of *another life*.

Secondly, When GOD calls upon us to *return* unto him, he requires of us a firm and fixed *resolution* of doing our duty more carefully and diligently for the future. Certainly no man can *return* unto the LORD, until he be first convinced that he has been

been negligent in his duty to him; and therefore resolves to do it better for the time to come. What is it to depart from GOD, but to depart from our duty, and to leave it undone? And therefore to return unto him, is in effect to return to our duty and allegiance to him, resolving that, by the grace of GOD, no temptation shall for the future make us negligent in those things that he requires of us.

3dly, He requires of us, not only a *resolution*, but a solemn *promise* and *engagement* of doing our *duty* more punctually and faithfully than ever. This is plain; for our *departure* from GOD is a breach of our *covenant* with him; and by consequence our *returning* to him must needs be a renewing of our *covenant*. But then I would have you to understand, that all our *resolutions* and *engagements* of this kind will be to no purpose, unless they be made in the *strength* of GOD. If we make them in our own *strength*, we can never be steadfast in them; we will soon forget them, and depart as far from GOD as ever: But notwithstanding of this, 'tis still our duty to bring ourselves under the most awful and strongest engagements. And here, there is one thing that I would mind you of, to wit, that in returning to GOD, we are not only to bind and engage ourselves to the performance of *personal*, but also of *relative* duties: So that we cannot be said to return to GOD, or our duty to him, unless we resolve and engage to perform all the *duties* of our several *places* and *relations*, whether as *parents* or *children*, *masters* or *servants*, *husbands* or *wives*, or the like.

4thly, He requires that we cheerfully consent to the terms that he has been graciously pleased to propound to us in his word. We must not, and (if we be truly humble and penitent) we will not stand upon terms with GOD, but freely and willingly yield to any terms he has been pleased to give us; and reckon on nothing that he requires of us, *hard* or *unreasonable*: No, we will reckon it abundant grace, that he vouchsafes to receive us upon any terms. You will see the Prodigal of this disposition. He freely owns, that by his wicked ways he had justly forfeited the privilege of *Sonship*; and therefore if his Father would but condescend to receive him into favour, he was content of any station that he should please to place him in; were it never so mean. *I am not worthy*, says he, *to be called thy Son, make me*

of thy hired servants; Luke xv. 19. As if he had said, That is good enough, and too good for me. True penitents have a high value for the privileges of GOD's house, and will be glad of any place there, so as they may but be in it, yea, were they but *door-keepers*, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. If it be imposed upon them by their heavenly Father, to sit down with the meanest of his servants, the penitents will not only submit to it, but count it a preference, in comparison of a state of distance from GOD.

Let me therefore beseech every one of you in the words of my Father, *Return ye backsliding Children.* And to excite you to this, I desire you to consider these particulars following, *First, How loving and desirous GOD is that ye should return unto him.* What is the meaning of all the earnest and pressing invitations, those pathetic expostulations, and solemn protestations of his readiness to receive sinners, on their returning to him, that we so frequently meet with in scripture? How many promises of pardon, peace, reconciliation, and a great many other valuable blessings, has he made to penitent sinners? Nay, you will find him swearing, and pledging his life, which imports his Being, and all his infinite perfections in this matter. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his evil way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. If you return, GOD will deal in great mercy with you; though your sins be both many and great, yet he will pardon them freely for his own name's sake, and deal with you, as if you never sinned, nor backslidden from him. When a backslidden soul returns to GOD, GOD opens his infinite treasures, and gives him a right to all the blessings promised in his word. When the prodigal returned to his Father, we read not so much as of one who was forgiven, but that his Father gave him, notwithstanding of all his misbehaviours. He did not so much as challenge him for any thing he had done amiss. But that was not all; there was noble provision made for him: He came home in rags, and his Father not only clothed, but decked and adorned him. *He said to his servants, bring hither the best robes, and put on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry: For this my Son was lost, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.* The scope of

which Parable is to shew us what *welcome entertainment* penitent sinners will meet with, upon their returning to GOD.

Secondly, Unless you return, you shall certainly perish forever. There is no remedy for you otherwise. What can you promise to yourselves, by continuing in your sins, and going on in a course of rebellion against GOD? Is that the way to be happy, either in this world, or in that to come? Do ye intend to outbrave the most High? or can you grapple with the Almighty? Are ye able to fight it out against him? Surely when he contends, ye must overcome. What profit have ye ever found in the way of sin? Or what wages can ye expect from Satan and your lusts when ye have served them all your days? Are not the wages of sin death, and all kind of miseries, both in this life, and in that which is to come? And is there any thing inviting or engaging in these? Surely so long as you continue in your sins, ye are but *treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD*, Rom. ii. 5. What shall become of you, if you die in your sins? Oh! how fearful will your condition be! For who among you *can dwell with consuming flames*? Which of you *can dwell with everlasting burnings*? Isa. xxxi. 14. And yet this will be the portion of you from GOD, if you go on in your trespasses, and refuse to be reformed, or return to him from whom you have revolted.

Thirdly, If ye return to GOD, he will engage for a mutual constancy between him and you. I think that is one of the most remarkable promises in all the Bible, which you have: *And he will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. xxxii. 40. Observe the two expressions, *I will not turn from them, to do them good*, and *They shall not depart from me*. Here is the believer's security against apostasy from GOD. GOD has plighted his word, that the believer shall never fall away finally nor totally. He is engaged both for his own steadfastness and ours. He will faithfully perform his part of the covenant, and he will give us strength to perform ours. He requires no conditions from us, but what he is willing to give us ability to fulfil. As his covenanted people have the *anointing of the Spirit*, whereby they know all things; so they have the *strengthenings of the Spirit*, whereby

whereby they can do all things. Can you desire better encouragement in any thing, than you see we have to return to GOD, to become His people? Come then, and let us return unto Lord our GOD, and he will *receive us graciously*.

And thus I am naturally led to consider the third thing in the third branch of my text, namely, the encouraging promise that GOD makes use of to engage this people to return to him: *Repent ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your backslidings*. The sort of which promise you may take in these three particu-

First, *To heal their backslidings* implies GOD's *pardon*ing all *their sins*. Now, pardon of sin consists in absolving the sinner from the guilt of sin, and from the punishment which is due to him for his sin. And, how great a mercy this is, they best know who have felt the weight and burden of their sins; who have been filled with the terrors of the law, and the apprehensions of the wrath. It was upon good ground that David said, *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered: Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*, Ps. xxxii.

This is the ground of all felicity, the fundamental principle from whence all the other ingredients in our happiness flow. Without the pardon of sin we are most miserable, tho' we had in our possession all the comforts this world can afford. And so much the greater is the blessing of having our sins pardoned, that when GOD pardons a sinner, he pardons him fully, he pardons him finally. *As far as the East is from the West, so hath he removed our transgressions from us*, Psal. ciii. 12. The East and the West! These two distant and opposite points of the compass will as soon meet together (which is simply impossible in nature) as the penitent returning sinner, and his pardoned sins meet together for condemnation.

Secondly, It implies our being received into a state of peace and reconciliation, a state of favour and friendship with GOD. For when GOD pardons a sinner, he not only remits the debt, but he takes him into covenant with himself, and bears a peculiar regard to him as his friend; making him heir of all the *exceeding great and precious promises* contained in his word. When GOD pardons our sins, tho' we have formerly buried or wasted our talents, yet he continues us in his service, entrusts us with more,

and carries towards us, as if we had never offended him. The GOD should remit our sins, pardon our guilt, and absolve us from the punishment due to us for our sins, is indeed wonderful grace: But that he should likewise receive us into his favour and carry towards us, as if we had never done any thing against him is yet more surprizing and wonderful. In the favour of GOD lies our very life and happiness: If we have this, we need not care how little the world regard us; but if we want the favour of GOD, we are in an undone state, how much soever we may thrive in outward things: And therefore to get our peace made with GOD, and to have an interest in his favour, should be our chief study. This is indeed the *one thing needful*; and whenever we neglect, we must by no means neglect this: It must be sought chiefly, and in the first place.

3dly, It implies likewise GOD's gracious promise, to cure them of their natural propensity and inclination to backsliding; by bestowing his renewing and establishing grace upon them. If you indeed return to GOD, he will stablish, strengthen and settle you in his ways, so that ye shall never apostatize from him. He will guide you by his Counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory. He will be a sun to direct you, and a shield to protect you. He will strengthen you for duties, fortify you against temptations, enable you to bear afflictions, and arm you against all the difficulties and oppositions you may meet with; and, in a word, he will make his *grace sufficient for you*. He will make you able to cleave unto that which is good; and he will hold up your goings in his paths, that your footsteps slip not. If GOD will, upon your returning to him, in a great measure, take away that natural propensity to evil, and aversion to good, that has hitherto carried you away from him; and, in place thereof, will plant in your souls a desire and inclination to that which is good, and an aversion to that which is evil. He will renew you in the whole man after his own image, and make you die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; so that old things shall pass away, and all things in you shall become new: He will destroy the power and dominion of sin in you, and bring you into the glorious liberty of the Sons of GOD, making you run without wearying, and walk without fainting, in the way of his commandments.

And now, for Application of this head. See from thence the great goodness and condescension of GOD to humble and penitent sinners; in so far as he gives them such encouragement to turn unto him: For, he will not only receive them graciously, and love them freely, but sanctify and renew them thoroughly; even in soul, body and Spirit. He will plant his image in their souls, put his fear and his Spirit within them; he will write his laws in their hearts, and cause them to walk in his ways. He will not only pardon their former backslidings, but prevent their revolting for the future: He will admit them into a state of nearness and fellowship with himself, and they shall have access with boldness unto the throne of his grace continually. What excess of folly then are they guilty of, who refuse to return unto him, and will go on in their trespasses.

Now, in order to your returning to GOD, take these three directions, with which I shall conclude this discourse.

First, Study to be thoroughly acquainted with yourselves: for, assure you, men's ignorance of themselves, is one great cause why they reject GOD's kind and gracious offers. They dream of nothing but peace and safety, tho' eternal wrath and destruction be hanging over their heads; ready to swallow them up every moment, and they have nothing to screen them from it. As was with the Church of Laodicea of old, so it is with multitudes among us: They fancy they are rich and *increased in goods*, and *stand in need of nothing*; while in the mean time they are *poor*, and *wretched*, and *miserable*, and *blind*, and *naked*, Rev. 17. But O that I could prevail with you, to make a serious enquiry into the state of your souls: This would soon bring you to a sight and sense of your undone and miserable condition: then to such a sense of your present danger, as would convince you, that you can live no longer in a state of backsliding from GOD, and make you hasten out of that deplorable state. If you intend to partake of the Lord's Supper, it is absolutely necessary that you first examine yourselves, I mean, both your hearts and your lives, according to the apostle's direction: *But, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*, 1 Cor. xi. 23. But even such of you as have no design of partaking of this holy ordinance, it is highly necessary that you search both your hearts and lives, in order to your being brought to

to a hearty compliance with the exhortation given you in the text. For I assure you, men's ignorance of themselves is one great cause of their refusing to return unto GOD: and until they know much of themselves, nothing can persuade them to return.

Secondly, Believe the sincerity of GOD's gracious offers, together with the undoubted certainty both of the promises and threatenings of his word. Did people really believe, that GOD is in good earnest with them, it is impossible they could slight his offers, at the rate they do. And, that he is sincere in his offers, is unquestionable from what I observed to you before, concerning the pressing invitations he gives us to return unto him; and the solemn protestations of his readiness to receive the greatest of sinners, upon their hearty sorrow and repentance. But the mischief is, the greatest part of people never allow themselves a serious thought of these things, otherwise it is impossible they could stand out so obstinately against GOD's gracious calls and invitations. Labour also, I say, to believe the truth of all the promises of the word of GOD; that there is really so much advantage to be had by returning to GOD, as the Spirit of GOD assures you there is. And on the other hand, you must likewise believe the truth of the threatenings, that there is really so much danger in rejecting GOD's gracious calls, and in persevering in a course of backsliding; that while you are running away from GOD, you are with both hands pulling down his vengeance upon yourselves. Would men wallow in all manner of wickedness, if they really believed there is so much danger in it? Surely no. But if you will not believe this now, you shall be made to believe it hereafter, to your fatal cost and experience, when you feel the smart of GOD's anger.

Thirdly, Labour to have a just notion of serious religion, and believe that GOD is a good Master; that his commandments are not grievous; that his yoke is easy, and his burden light. It is one of Satan's chief devices, by which he detains people in his service, to represent religion as a most unpleasant and melancholly thing; and as a hard and intolerable bondage, which we will never be able to endure. And truly, if we will allow him to draw the picture of a religious life, and take his representation of it, he will be sure to set it off with so many seeming dis-

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antages, as will be apt to frighten us; and to make us lay aside all thoughts of it forever. But is it not strange, that any would seem to give more credit to him that was both a *liar* and *murderer* from the *beginning*, than to the *GOD* of *truth*, who cannot lie? Hath not *GOD* in his word given us all assurance, that *Godliness* is *profitable* unto all things, having the *promise* of the *life* that now is, and of that which is to come? 1 Tim. i. 8. And that *wisdom's* ways are ways of *pleasantness*, and all her paths are *peace*, Prov. iii. 17. Now, I say, possess your minds with this notion of *serious religion*, that it is both the most *pleasant* and *profitable* thing imaginable; and then, I persuade myself, you cannot live *strangers* to it.

S E R M O N II.

Before the L O R D's S U P P E R.

The Penitent's dutiful Return to GOD's Gracious Call.

J E R E M I A H iii. 22,

—Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the L O R D
our G O D.

THE essential goodness of *GOD*, and his special goodwill towards the children of *men*, are, to a considering mind, divers ways apparent: But, I may say, in nothing does the divine goodness shine forth more illustriously, than in those *invitations* he has given *sinners* to return unto him; one of which, you see, is presented to us in the preceeding part of this *sermon*. And it is very remarkable, that *GOD* never calls us to any duty, but he enforceth it with some powerful *argument*; instance whereof you have there also. Does he call *backsliding children* to return unto him? It is that he may *heal their backslidings*. And, O! How happy were it for us, if what follows

lows in the *second branch* of the *text*, were the language of our hearts this day, *Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our GOD*. This would be a noble disposition of mind for you that are intending to sit down at the *LORD's table* to-morrow.

On the *fast day* I opened up and applied the *first branch* of the *text* in its several parts; and am now to consider the *second*. Where you may observe *two things*. *First*, The happy influence that *GOD's call* had upon his people: They were brought to comply chearfully with his offer, *Lo, we come unto thee*. When the outward call of the word comes with power, it certainly makes a *willing people*. *2dly*, That which moved them to comply with *GOD's gracious offer*; it was the consideration of his sovereignty over them, and his propriety in them: *For thou art the LORD our GOD*. And both of these are ushered in with a note of attention, *BEHOLD*. I shall begin with the *first* of these; *Behold, we come unto thee*. And here I shall endeavour to show you, *What it is to come unto GOD*, and then apply the same.

To *come unto GOD*, in few words, is actually to believe in him, chearfully to *consent* to, and *accept* of his gracious terms of peace and salvation. To *come unto him* is, to *deny* ourselves, take up our *cross*, and to *follow* him: It is to take *GOD* for our *Father*, *CHRIST* for our *Redeemer*, and the *HOLY GHOST* for our *Sanctifier*. It is to make an universal resignation of ourselves to him; to bind ourselves to a constant and unlimited *obedience* to his laws; and chearfully to submit to any lot that he shall please to carve out for us, how mean and afflicting ever it may be. But more particularly, I shall endeavour to explain this in the following observations.

First, When we *come* to *GOD* or *CHRIST*, we must not only consider him as a *Redeemer* to save us, but likewise as a *Lawgiver* to command and rule over us. If you imagine *Christ* only to be a *Priest*, to satisfy and interceed for you, and do not at the same time consider him as a *King* to rule over you; or if you fancy you can partake of the benefits of his death, without taking up your *cross* in *mortification* and *sufferings*, and without following him in *holiness* and *obedience*; what consent you give but to an *imaginary Saviour*; a *Saviour* of your own framing.

not of GOD's *sending*. You must then receive him wholly; he is a *teaching Prophet*, as he is an *attoning Priest*, and as he is a *commanding King*. As he is a *Prophet*, you must hear him; in him learn of him; and must never turn away your ear from him: but receive all your instructions from him, even from his word. GOD's *testimonies* were *David's* counsellors, and so must they be ours, *Plal. cxix. 24*. These are the best counsellors, both for kings and private persons: and we will find greater safety in consulting of them, than in the *multitude* of other counsellors. As he is a *Priest*, we must look upon him to be the only *Saviour* of sinners; and accordingly must apply to him, and rely on him alone, for pardon, peace, reconciliation, justification, salvation, and every thing we want; utterly disclaiming all our own *righteousness*, but making mention of his *righteousness*, even of his *only*; and counting all things but *loss* and *dung* for him, *Phil. iii. 8*. As he is a *King*, we must acknowledge his dominion and sovereignty over us; cheerfully submitting our whole man, both soul and body, to the laws of his kingdom; laying out ourselves to advance the honour of his kingdom and glory in the world; and that to the utmost of our power, in our several stations and capacities: and cheerfully submitting to every thing, lot or condition of life, that he by his holy and wise providence shall think fit to carve out for us, without murmuring or repining at any of his administrations. In one word, as he is a *King*, he must have his *throne* set up in our hearts; and under his banner we must constantly fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh; never entering into any correspondence, either secret or open, with any of his enemies, to wit, our *old lusts*: but in all respects behaving ourselves as becomes his faithful and loyal subjects.

Secondly, This *coming unto GOD*, implies an earnest *desire* of being united to and *interested* in him; that he may be our GOD and portion. If once we attain to this, we may well say with *David*, *The lines are fallen to us in a pleasant place; yea, we have a goodly heritage*. *Plal. xvi. 6*. And truly, 'tis impossible for they, who have had gracious discoveries of GOD, must have an earnest desire of being interested in him. *David's soul* was *drawn hard after GOD*. *Plal. lxxiii. 8*: *And his heart and his voice cried out for him*; *Plal. lxxxiv. 2*. In which high strains,

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of the purest divine rhetoric, was this holy man's soul carried out after GOD. GOD was the *one* thing, and the *only* thing that his soul longed for. Without GOD all was nothing to him, and in him he had all. His gracious presence was enough to him; and without that, all societies or multitudes of men, yea, multitudes even of saints or good men, were but solitudes, and as widowhood to him.

But then you must understand, that no man can be said to have an interest in GOD, unless he be *divorced* from all other things. And, (1.) We must be *divorced* from our *lusts*; we may indeed have an interest in GOD, and yet have *sin* in us; nay it will inevitably be *in us*, so long as we are *in the body*: but it must not *govern us*, have *dominion* over us, nor *reign in our members*. It must not enter into our *frame and constitution*, unless must it *reign in our hearts*. On the contrary, we must *deny it*; we must *deny and renounce it*; we must *forake*, and *cast it off*, as the most hurtful and detestable thing imaginable, and set ourselves to have those *remains of corruption* in us *dead* more and more *mortified*. (2.) We must be divorced from *Satan*, and from his *service*, and not suffer ourselves to be any longer led *captives* by him at his will; but *resist him, stand fast in the faith*. (3.) We must be divorced from the world. We must not love the *world*, nor the things of the *world*; otherwise the *love of the Father* is not *in us*. We may indeed have an interest in GOD, and have the *world* too, for *grace* is not inconsistent with *riches*, nor with a large *estate*, 1 John ii. 15. But we cannot have an *interest* in GOD, and have our hearts set upon any thing that is *earthly*. We must *deny all world-lusts*, *crucify all earthly affections*, *set our hearts on things above*, *possess the world as if we possessed it not*, and *use the world, without abusing it*, because the fashion thereof soon passeth away. (4.) We must be divorced likewise from *ourselves*; we are GOD's by right of *creation*; we are his by right of *preservation* and *common providence*; and we are his by right of *redemption*. Now, let us also become his by *special resignation*: For in truth, GOD hath more and a better right to us, when we consider our being or our well-being, than any of us have to *ourselves*: therefore we must neither live, nor think, nor speak, nor act, nor walk, as our own, but as the LORD'S. Christ

If we would be his disciples, we must deny ourselves, Matth.

24. We must be denied to all our *self-wisdom*, our *self-will*, our *self-esteem*, our *self-righteousness*, our *self-interest*, and to all *self-ends*, not seeking our own things, but the things of GOD.

Thirdly, This coming unto GOD implies a relying on him, complacency in him, as a most sufficient and satisfying portion: truly if the Lord be our GOD, what can we have? or what we desire more? Gracious souls do not, and indeed they do not envy carnal or worldly men in their *sensual delights*, unless they have that which is infinitely better. Nay, a gracious soul can, when stript of all other enjoyments, solace himself in GOD: he can with pleasure and contentment sit down upon a ruinous heap of all his *creature comforts*, and rejoice in GOD, as the GOD of his *salvation*, and as infinitely surpassing *earthly enjoyments*. He can sing with the prophet Habak. *Tho' the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stall: Yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will praise in the GOD of my salvation*, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Now, all that I shall say by way of application of this head, shall only be, to give you some directions how you must come to GOD. And, (1.) See that ye come *humbly*, with a low opinion of yourselves, judging and condemning yourselves before him; like the poor *publican* you read of, who durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but stood a far off, and smote upon his breast, saying, GOD be merciful to me a sinner, Luke 18. 13. This is a frame of soul very proper for the Lord's table, where we should sit down with the humblest sense of our *unworthiness*, not only of being called the *children of GOD*, but as being *unworthy* even of the *crumbs* which may fall from the *children's table*. And I assure you, the more *humble* and *vile* you are in your own eyes, you will be the more *welcome* to the *master of the feast*. (2.) Come to GOD *penitently*, with a particular sense of your *sins*, and a hearty *sorrow* for all your *sinful doings* from GOD; and if ye do so, he will pour into your hearts the *oil of joy and gladness*. A penitent frame of heart is very suitable for the Lord's table; for here you are to look upon

him whom you have pierced, and mourn, Zech. xii. 10. When you see how *Christ's body was broken for us, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins*, should not our hearts be broken for our sins, which were the procuring cause of his death, and his other sufferings? (3.) Come unto GOD, admiring his wonderful and condescending grace and goodness, in allowing any of the sinful race of *mankind* to come unto him. GOD might have banished us all forever from his grace and favour, as he did the fallen angels; yet he not only allows, but invites and intreats us to come unto him, *that we may have life*. May we not cry out, *O the height, and depth, the length and breadth of this wonderful and matchless love!* (4.) Come unto GOD, believing and promising *faithfulness and constancy* in his word and service; and that thro' grace, ye will never backslide from him any more. Take with you words, and say, LORD, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render calves of our lips, Hosea xiv. 2. *What I know not, teach me; and wherein I have done evil, I will do so no more*, Psal. lxxxiv. 31. And truly, if any of you come unto GOD, and turn back from him afterwards, you will be in a worse condition than ever; your *last state* will be worse than your *first*: For if any man draw back, my soul, says GOD, shall have no pleasure in him, Hebr. x. 39. The meaning is, GOD will hate and forsake such a person. (5.) I must not forget to put you in mind that you must be sure to come unto GOD, in and thro' *Jesus Christ*; otherwise you can never be made welcome: For out of Christ, GOD is a *consuming fire to the workers of iniquity*; but in Christ, he is all grace and goodness, all mercy and kindness. GOD has made us *accepted in his beloved Son*, and they that come unto GOD in and thro' him, he will in no ways cast out. Say therefore with the church, *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself; so will not we go back from thee*, Psal. lxxx 17, 18.

The second thing in the text, is, That which moved this people to comply with GOD's *gracious offer*; and that was the consideration of his *sovereignty* over them, and his *propriety* in them; *For thou art the Lord our GOD*: as if they had said, "Other lords have indeed had dominion over us; but thou

our only rightful and lawful *Lord*: We have formerly served other gods, but thou alone art our *G O D*, and the *G O D* of our *fathers*; and from henceforth we will have none other besides thee."

Here I shall labour to show you what is implied in this expression, *Thou art the LORD our G O D*; and then apply the same. Two things are implied in it.

First, It implies a *mutual relation* between *G O D* and this people; and an *antient relation* it was. *G O D* had, of old, chosen *Israel* from among all the nations of the world, to be his people, even a *peculiar people* to himself; and they had chosen the *Lord* to be their *G O D*, and bound themselves to his service forever. *G O D* is a *Father* to his people, and they are his children: He is a *Husband* to them, and they are his *spouse*; he is a *Master* to them, and they are his *servants*; he is a *shepherd* to them, and they are the *sheep* of his pasture, and of his right hand. Now, if *G O D* be a father to us, he will provide for us, both as to temporals and spirituals. As to temporals, he will feed us with food convenient for us; he will also clothe us with raiment that is meet for us to wear; and bestow upon us such a portion of the good things of this life, as he sees best for us. And as to spirituals, we shall be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in *Christ Jesus*, Ephes. i. 3. and we shall be satisfied with the goodness of his house, as with marrow, and with fatness, Psal. lxxiii. 5. If he be our *Father*, he will instruct us; and if we be taught of *G O D*, we shall be well taught, and be ignorant of nothing that is necessary for us to know. As our *Father*, he will direct us in the way wherein we should go; he will lead us in all truth; he will guide us by his counsel, and clear up to us all our difficulties. As a *Father*, he will admit us to nearness and fellowship with himself, in duties, ordinances, and in providences. As a *Father*, he will give us the inheritance, even the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us: For this is peculiar to *G O D*'s children, above all children whatsoever, that they are all heirs of a whole kingdom. For if sons, then heirs, heirs of *G O D*, and joint heirs with *Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. And if *G O D* thus act towards us as his children, surely we are bound to honour him as our *Father*, to love him, to fear him, to trust in him, to obey

bey him. to submit to his corrections, and endeavour to imitate him in all his *imitable perfections*; that as he who has called us *holy*, so we also may be *holy* in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15.; and, in so far as we are capable, may be *perfect*, even as our Father which is in heaven is *perfect*, Matth. v. 48. As GOD is a *Father*, so he is a *Husband* to his people. *Thy Maker is thy Husband*, Isaiah liv. 5. And if he be our *Husband* he will love and cherish us; he will supply us with every thing we want and evidence a most tender care of us. And if we are married to him, we should be subject to him in every thing; we should honour him, we should depend on him, we should be faithful to him, even unto the death, and must take care not to offend him in any thing. As a *Husband*, he will dwell with us, and we must never depart from him: As he is a *Shepherd* to his people he will lead them, and feed them in the green pastures of his ordinances; he will defend them from all their enemies, among whom they live as *sheep*, in the midst of so many *ravenous wolves*; he will watch over them in time of a storm, and will defend them from all danger: He will gently lead those that are with young, and will carry the lambs in his bosom. And if we be the *sheep* of his pasture, we are bound to hear his voice; and the voice of a stranger we must not hear: We must follow him and must not wander or stray from him, but keep close to him, and pasture all the days of our lives: for if we wander from him, we will soon lose ourselves, and become a prey to our enemies; but if we keep his way, we are safe, and nothing can harm us.

Secondly, It implies a *mutual interest* in each other. And first, On GOD's part. He vouchsafes to his people an interest in all his essential, infinite and glorious *perfections*. If he be our GOD, his infinite power shall be ours, to protect us from all our enemies, to strengthen us for duties, to support us under all our afflictions, to fortify us against all our temptations and difficulties, to bring us out of all our troubles, and to land us safely in eternal blefs. His infinite wisdom shall be ours, to direct our ways, and lead us into all truth, to defeat the designs of our enemies, and to make even the worst things we meet with work together for our good. His infinite faithfulness shall be ours, to make good all the promises of his word, even to make

em all in Christ, yea, and in him, Amen, to the glory of GOD,
 Cor. i. 20. His infinite *goodness* shall be ours, to supply all
 wants, and to bestow upon us every thing that is necessary
 us. His infinite *mercy* and *grace* shall be ours, to pardon
 our sins, and to pass by all our failings and imperfections.
 His infinite *patience* shall be ours, waiting to be *gracious* to us.
 He like may be said with respect to all his other attributes and
 fections; for his people have an interest in them all.
 dly, They have an interest in all his personal *subsistences*.
 is the *Father*, *Son*, and *blessed Spirit*; and he is graciously
 ased to vouchsafe his people an interest in all these. As he
 GOD the *Father*, he *creates* them a-new, after his own blessed
 ge, in *knowledge*, *righteousness* and *true holiness*, whereby they
 enabled to *die daily unto sin*, and *live unto righteousness*. As
 is GOD the *Son*, he *redeems* and *saves* them; he conquers the
 rld, he destroys *death*, and will shortly bruise *Satan* under
 ir feet. He sweetens their *crosses*; he brings them near to
 OD, and reconciles them to the *Father*; he *succours* them
 en they are *tempted*, *interceeds* for them, procures them ac-
 tance in all their duties and services, and infallibly procures
 nal *salvation* for them; he makes their *crosses* easy, their
 orts sweet, and *death itself* a gain to them. As he is GOD
 holy *Spirit*, he washeth, cleanseth, sanctifieth and healeth
 m; he subdues their *corruptions*, and makes them more and
 re conformed to the *image* of GOD. He enlightens their
 d, renews their *will*, spiritualizeth their *affections*, and en-
 es them for their whole work and duty: He directs their
 y, he guides them by his *counsel*, and leads them in a *plain*
 h: He comforts them in all their *tribulations*, he witnesseth
 r adoption, and seals them unto the day of *redemption*: He
 ells in them; he gives them the *earnest* of heaven, and makes
 rcession for them, with *groanings that cannot be uttered*,
 n. viii. 26.
 dly, They have an interest in all that he hath as God. O
 at a large portion must God's people have then! Surely,
 is that people whose GOD is the Lord, and well may they be
 tent with their lot; for what can they have more? Or what
 they desire more? Gracious souls covet still more and more
 GOD, but surely they need to covet nothing else. They
 need

need not envy others in their *worldly* and *sensual* delights, but count themselves truly happy in what they have, and never doubt but to be completely and eternally happy in what they yet hope for. All that is in the world cannot make us happy unless the *Lord be our GOD*; neither can the want of the world make us miserable, if he be *our GOD*; for there is in him every thing to make us completely happy. He hath life for our quickening, *health* for our diseases, and *strength* for our establishment: he hath *wealth* to enrich us, *pleasure* to delight us, *liberty* to enlarge us, *friends* to support us, *righteousness* to clothe us, *holiness* to adorn us, *comforts* to cheer us, and *glory* to crown us. In one word, whether *Paul* or *Apollus*, or *Cephas*, or the *world*, or *life*, or *death*, or things *present*, or things *to come*, all are *ours*, and we are *Christ's*, and *Christ is GOD*: so says the apostle, 1 Cor. iii, 22, 23.

4thly, They have an *interest* in all that *GOD* hath promised to do, or can do for his people, as *their GOD*. And as truly as he can supply their *wants*, remove their *fears*, prevent their *damages*, assuage their *grief*, keep them from *troubles*, support them under them, deliver them out of them, and do them *good* by them: He can *pardon* their *sins*, give them his *spirit* and *enrich* them by his *grace*, *call* them *effectually*, *justify* them *freely*, *adopt* them *graciously*, *sanctify* them *wholly*, and *save* them *eternally*. Nay, if need be, what can he not do for his people? And what has he not done for them? He can *divide* the *waters* of the *sea* before them; he can dissolve the *rock* of *flint* into a *stream* of *water*; he can rain *flesh* and *bread* out of the *clouds*; he can stop the course of the *sun* and *moon*, he can multiply their *meal* and their *oil*, he can stop the mouths of *lions*, he can quench the fury of devouring *flames*, and *many such things* can he do *with him*. His *hand* is not *shortened*; but he both can and will do the same things for his people, now as formerly, if there be the like necessity and occasion.

Let us next consider what this *mutual interest* implies on the part of *GOD's people*. And *first*, It implies a *resignation* of themselves to *GOD* in all that they are. *Man* is made up of two constituent parts; a mortal *body*, and an immortal *soul*. And both these *GOD's people* yield unto him, in devoting themselves to his service. We must devote our souls to *GOD*, w

ly, It implies a *resignation* of ourselves to GOD in every
tion; whether we be husbands or wives, parents or children,
masters or servants, ministers or private Christians, magistrates
subjects; or whatsoever other relation we bear to one ano-
; in all these we must be wholly devoted to GOD, and lay
selves out in these capacities, with our utmost diligence and
lication, to advance his glory and honour in the world. Pa-
s are bound to bring up their *children* in the *nurture and*
reprovision of the Lord, to give them a pious *example* and good
structions; to *reprove* their faults, and *correct* their errors;
our out fervent *prayers* for them, and endeavour to give
an early favour of *serious religion*. *Masters of families* are
ged to instruct their *servants*, to reprove their faults, to com-
d them to seek GOD, and to mind the concerns of their
s; and to go before them in the way to heaven; and they
bound to worship GOD daily in their *families*. Every man
ld have a church in his house; and remember, if you ne-
t your duty in any of these, and they perish through your
igence, the blood of their souls will GOD require at your
s: For you must know, that *parents* and *masters* are en-
ted with the care of the souls of their *children* and *servants*,
must answer for their discharge of that trust. Has GOD
ny of you in a station above others? he expects you will
e him faithfully in that station, by doing all you can to en-
these in a religious course of life, that you can have any in-
nce upon.

ally, it implies a *resignation* of all our *talents* to GOD; bind-
and obliging ourselves to employ them for him. We must
hide our *talents* in *napkins*; nor yet employ them only for
R advancing

advancing our own private interest and concerns; but principally for the glory of him who hath bestowed them on us. Whatever *talents* GOD hath been pleased to bestow on any of us, his chief end in bestowing them is, that we may occupy *them for him*: And truly, if we do not employ our *talents* for GOD, we employ them against him; for, as Christ says, *He that is not with me, is against me*, Matth. xii. 30. This is a gross abuse of GOD's *goodness*, and cannot but be most *provoking* to him, because it is indeed a *fighting against GOD with his own weapons*. Has GOD bestowed upon any of us the gift of a large memory? Let us not employ this *talent* in retaining the vain and frothy notions of foolish men, but make it a *treasury*, wherein we lay up all Christ's sayings, and wherein may be preserved the grateful remembrance of all GOD's kind dealings towards us. Has GOD bestowed on any of us a *solid judgment* and *understanding*? Let us employ that *talent* in the study of GOD's law, and in being useful in that church and common wealth, where we are members. The like may be said with respect to other *talents*: For we must all give an account of our stewardship.

4thly, It implies a *resignation* of all our worldly enjoyments and *possessions* to GOD. Hence we are commanded to *honor the LORD with our substance, and with the first fruits of all our increase*, Prov. iii. 9. We must lay down all our earthly comforts at his feet, and be content that we, and all our concerns in this world, be entirely at his disposal. And when he, in his holy and wise providence, shall think fit to take any of them from us, we must not quarrel nor find fault; we must not murmur nor repine; but take all in good part that he thinks meet to try us with, saying with *Job* in the like case, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job i. 21. Such a submissive disposition of mind will be most pleasing to GOD. And, pray you, what benefit can we reap by our murmuring? Truly, none at all, but much hurt: for to murmur under the rod, will make the burden so much the more heavy and insupportable to us; and is the way to provoke GOD to smite us with sorer and greater plagues. But why should we murmur when we lose any of our *creature comforts*? Does GOD do any injustice to us? Or, Does he take any thing from us but what is his *own*? And should we take it ill, when he seeks to

Or, should we not much rather be thankful, that he was pleased to allow us the enjoyment of it so long? Even the *heavens* will rise up against many in this *generation*, and condemn them: For, hear what *Epicletus*, one of their *Philosophers* says to this purpose. *When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child be taken away by death, or suppose part of thy estate be taken from thee, or the like; say not, I have lost it; but I have recovered it, and returned it to the rightful owner again.*

Clearly, It implies an entire *resignation* of ourselves to GOD, in that we can either *do* or *suffer* for his sake and the gospel's. *To do* for GOD is our great honour: But to *suffer* for him is double honour. Hence the apostle speaks of it as a singular *honour* and privilege, *to suffer for Christ, and for the cause of religion.* To you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his sake, Phil. i. 29. We should willingly bear all the hatred and reproaches, all the indignities and persecutions we may meet with, for *Christ's sake* and the *gospel's* as *Jesus* did; *esteeming even the reproaches of Christ, to be greater than all the treasures of Egypt.* Our blessed Saviour has promised us, *That unless we take up our cross, we cannot be his disciples;* and that we must lay our account to meet with trials and afflictions in the world. Nay, there is no getting to heaven, *thru' many tribulations.* But for our encouragement, he has assured us, that whatever we shall *lose* or *suffer* for him, shall be plentifully rewarded. And besides, GOD never laid a piece of *trial* on any of his people, but what he gave them *strength* to bear: he will either bring up our *strength* to our *burden* or bring down our *burden* to our *strength.* If ever GOD call us out to suffer for his name's sake, we shall find our *sufferings* not so hard to bear, as now at a distance they may seem to be. And the reason is plain, because GOD is always in a special manner *present* with his people, when he calls them to suffer; which sweetens a suffering lot to them. He has promised to be with his people, when they pass thro' the fire, and thro' the water, so that the *flames* shall not *consume* them, nor shall the water *drown* them.

We must now proceed to the *application*, which I shall discuss in the *use of trial.* Surely it concerns us all to know, whether the Lord be our GOD yea or not. And to assist you in this

matter take these following marks briefly. (1) Try yourselves by the esteem you have of GOD. Do ye esteem him infinite above all *earthly enjoyments*? Can ye say with the *Psalms* *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And upon the earth there is none that I desire besides thee?* *Psal. lxxiii. 25.* Do ye prize him above your only *riches and treasure*, your only *portion and happiness*, your only heaven? Could you cheerfully part with every thing that is dear to you in the world, rather than part with him? If it be so, this is a good sign that the Lord is your GOD. (2) Try yourselves in this matter by the trust you put in GOD. Do ye *rely* more upon him than upon all others, to supply your wants, to suppress your fears, to remove your dangers, to direct your ways, and deliver you from all your troubles? Then is the Lord your GOD. But they that can, in their extremities and exigencies, trust to their *friends*, or their *riches*, or their *policy*, and not in the *living GOD*, are yet without GOD in the world. (3) Try yourselves also in this matter by your fear of GOD. Do ye fear the Lord as your GOD? Are ye more afraid to offend him, than to offend man, even the greatest men? Does the fear of GOD more effectually restrain you from sin, than the fear of any creature can push you on to commit? And does the fear of GOD more effectually oblige you to your duty, than the fear of man can deter you from it? (4) Try yourselves also by the way and manner that you serve GOD, in your duties. Do ye serve him *reverently, obediently, and cheerfully*? Do ye serve him *purely*, worshipping him with *pure hearts, and clean hands*? And do ye serve him only, and not *sin, Satan, the world*, nor your *lusts and pleasures*? Do ye serve him *entirely* with the *whole heart and soul*? And do ye serve him *continually* without wearying of his service? By these you may judge yourselves, whether the Lord be your GOD; and whether ye are qualified for the Lord's table yea or not. For if you have not a *high esteem* of GOD; if you do not trust all your concerns to him; if you do not fear him, worship and serve him, in the manner that I have now described, you have no right to this *holy ordinance*; and therefore, if ye presume to sit down at the Lord's table, ye shall eat and drink judgment to yourselves, and be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

S E R M O N III.

Before the S A C R A M E N T.*The Reasonableness and Advantages of serving GOD.*

J O S H U A xxiv. 15.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods whom your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, &c.

IN this chapter we have an account of the great care that this holy man *Joshua* took to confirm the people of *Israel* in the true faith and worship of GOD, and that they might persevere therein after his decease. In order to which, he summons a general assembly of the heads and princes of the congregation of *Israel*, and puts them in mind of the great things that GOD had done for *them* and their *fathers*. This you have an account of in the first thirteen verses of the chapter; and in the fourteenth verse he tells them, how it was their indispensable duty to *serve* GOD, even the Lord *Jehovah*, in opposition to all other gods. *Now, therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.* And then in the words of the text, he endeavours to bring the *Israelites* to make the *true religion* their own free and deliberate choice;

choice; that the thing which they obliged themselves to, might be the more binding upon them, being done without any compulsion. *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve. whether the gods whom your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood: or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell.*

In which words there are four things to be considered.

(1) The candidates that stood in the election; and there were two, viz. on one side, the Lord *J E H O V A*, who had done so much for them and their ancestors; and on the other side, either the gods whom their fathers served, that were before the flood, and might recommend themselves to those that were fond of antiquity; or the gods of their neighbours the Amorites, in whose land they dwelt, who on that account might insinuate themselves into the affections of those that were more complaisant than religious, or fond of novelties. (2) *Joshua* here supposeth, that possibly there might be some among them, to whom, upon some account or other, it might seem evil to serve the Lord, that is, unjust and unreasonable, or at least someway inconvenient and disadvantageous. Carnal and earthly-minded people think it unreasonable and hard thing that they should be obliged to deny themselves, mortify the flesh, take up their cross, expose themselves to dangers, and the like: these seem to them *hard saying* and *who can bear them?* (3) He refers the matter to themselves. *Choose you whom you will serve.* Not as if he had left them to their liberty, whether they would serve God or idols; for he does not lay the reins upon their neck, and give them a licence to change their religion, if it should please them, and serve strange gods. Nay, doubtless, had they apostatized from God, he, as supreme Magistrate, would have inflicted condign punishment upon them, and have cut them off from among their people, as the law of God obliged him to have done in that case: but he useth this kind of speech, partly as a powerful argument to keep them constant to GOD: in effect, telling them, that there is such a wide difference betwixt these two, *Worshipping the Lord that delivered them from the Egyptian bondage, and brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey, and, bowing to idols, that one would not think it possible, they should forsake God, to follow them, even tho' it were left to their own choice.* It is much like *Elijah's* speech

ch to the *Israelites*, *How long wilt thou halt between two opinions ?*
the Lord be God, follow him ; but if Baal, then follow him, 1 Kings
 ii. 21. And partly, that having once, of their own accord, *chosen*
the Lord to be their God, they might thereby be the more attached
 to his service ; and resolutely cleave to him for ever. He would
 have them state the matter *impartially*, and weigh things in an
 even *balance* : and then determine for that which they found to
 be really true and good. Religion hath so much of evident rea-
 son and equity on its side, that it may be safely referred to every
 man that allows himself serious thoughts, either to chuse or re-
 ject it ; for the merits of the cause are so plain, that no consider-
 ing person can do otherways than chuse it. The case
 is clear that it determines itself. Let us therefore resolve up-
 on a life of *serious godliness*, not because we know no other, but
 because really upon search we can find no better. (4.) He de-
 cides a present and speedy resolution, or what they were deter-
 mined to do in this weighty affair. The business was of such
 importance, and of so great moment, that it would admit of no de-
 lay, and therefore they must be speedy in their conclusion, and
 not waver or hang in suspense. *Chuse you this day whom you will*
 serve. As if he had said, " I have now stated the matter, and
 laid it very plainly before you ; and you must quickly bring it
 to an issue, and not stand halting and unresolved, where there
 is no occasion for it."

And thus I have divided and opened up the words a little
 for you ; and you see they might afford matter for a very large
 discourse : but I shall comprehend what I resolve to say upon
 this, under these following heads. *First*, I shall lay before you
 an account of those things that, to some people, may seem *evil*
 and hurtful in the *service of GOD*, and let you see that they are
 real evils. *2dly*, I shall show you the real and certain *evils*
 that constantly attend the *service of Satan*, and of our *lusts*.
 Reckon up all the *seeming advantages* that can attend the
 service, either of *Satan* or our *lusts*. *4thly*, Give you some
 account of the many *excellent advantages* which we may cer-
 tainly promise ourselves, by chusing the *service of GOD*, and
 being faithful and stedfast in it. And, *5thly*, Briefly apply
 the whole.

As to the *first* of these ; all the evils or inconveniencies that
 can sustain by the *service of GOD*, and which every one
 that

that would chuse his service, must both lay his account to meet with, or provide and prepare for, may be reduced to these heads.

First, Perhaps the service of GOD may expose us to *calumnies* and *reproaches* from the profane herd of *ungodly* men. This is no new thing under the sun, but has befallen the most eminent *saints* and *servants* of GOD in all ages. Thus David's religion made him the *song of the drunkards*; Psal. lxxix. 12. that wretched crew making themselves and their graceless companions *merry* with this holy man's *religion*, and making a jest of him for that very thing wherein they should have taken him for their pattern. Thus also the *apostles* and true *primitive Christians* were *persecuted*, *reviled*, and *defamed*; made as the *waste* *filth of the world*, and *off scouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. 12; 13. But, what tho' graceless and profane men should mock and reproach you never so much for your *religion*; tho' they should make you the subject of their daily banter and ridicule, and speak all manner of *evil against you falsely*, for the sake of *Christ* and the *gospel*? *Christ* bore reproaches for us, and shall not we bear reproaches for him? Let us therefore keep GOD's ways; let us be faithful servants to him, and he will take care of our reputation, and extricate us out of all our difficulties, not only with *comfort*, but with *credit* also. So says the *Psalmist*, *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day*, Psal xxxvii. 5, 6. A godly man's integrity may for a while lie hid under a cloud, and he may be mistaken for a mere *hypocrite*; but GOD in his good time will retrieve his credit and reputation: so that, if we have the approbation of GOD, and the testimony of a good conscience, what need we care how harshly the world judge, or how unjustly they speak of us.

Secondly, It may be, the service of GOD will expose you to the *hatred*, as well as the *reproaches* of an *evil world*. It is an extraordinary thing for the servants and people of GOD, to suffer persecution for righteousness sake: For all that will be faithful in *Christ Jesus* shall suffer persecution, 2 Tim. iii. 12. and therefore must lay their account with this. *Christ* told his disciples, *That the time would come, that they should be hated of men for his name's sake*, Matth. x. 22. But whatever hatred

of us shall meet with upon that score, let it not move us, neither let it disgust us at *true religion*, nor make us think the curse of *Christ*; and of his service; for he will both bear a part with us in all the hatred we shall meet with upon this account, and support us under all these disadvantages. You have a remarkable word to this purpose in the writings of the prophet *Isaiah*, *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them*, *Isaiah lxiii. 9*: Where *G O D* is expressing concern and sympathy he has for his people in all their afflictions, in so much as he looks upon all the injuries done to them, as if done immediately to his own person, and resents them accordingly. Thus when *Saul* (who was afterwards called *Paul*) was going in a full career of wickedness, and persecuting, even to death, all that professed the *name of Christ*, there came a voice to him from heaven, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* And he cries out, *Who art thou, Lord?* The Lord said, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*, *Acts ix. 5, 6*. *Saul* thought he was only persecuting a company of poor weak silly people, little imagining that it was *one in heaven*, whom he was thus while, insulting; for surely had he known what he was doing, he would not have persecuted the *Lord of glory*. So they who hate or persecute the saints, hate and persecute *Christ himself*; and he resents what is done against them, as if done against himself: And therefore he tells us, That, in the last day of judgment, he will pronounce sentence accordingly, after this manner, *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me; and in as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me*, *Matth. xxv. 40, 45*. If therefore we be in favour and friendship with *G O D*, we need not be troubled how much the world hate us: for the apostle *James* observes, that *the enmity of the world is enmity with G O D*, *James iv. 5*. The meaning of which is, that it is a shrewd sign of a man's being in a state of enmity with *G O D*, when he has too much of the friendship of the world: and consequently it is a good sign of being in a state of friendship with *G O D*, when the world is in enmity against us; especially if that enmity be occasioned by our zeal and steadfastness in the service of *G O D*. Thirdly, The service of *G O D* may perhaps expose us to the loss of all our worldly comforts: and indeed none of us can

tell what religion may cost us some time or other. For as has cost some the loss of their liberty, and banishment from their native country, the forfeiture of their estates, and spoiling of their goods, yea, the loss of all their worldly and temporal enjoyments; so there is none of us can be sure but we may be exposed to the loss of all these, sooner or later, for our religion; but whatever losses of this kind we may sustain, on account of true religion, the same shall be plentifully rewarded, perhaps in this life, or, at farthest, in the life to come. For GOD will suffer none of his *servants* to be *losers at his hand*; nay, on the contrary, *great shall be their reward in heaven*, Matth. xix. 17. If, indeed, we chuse the service of GOD, we must resolve to part cheerfully with every thing that is valuable in this world when it may please GOD to put us to the trial. But whatever we lose this way, shall bring us in exceeding great gain, *hundred fold even in this life*, as our Saviour assures us. which we are to understand, not an hundred-fold IN SPECIES but IN VALUE, namely, spiritual blessings and comforts: these are an hundred-fold better than any earthly thing whatever. Tho' GOD has sometimes repaid his servants even in *specie*; as he restored *Job* after his trials, to much more worldly abundance than he had before, Job xlii. 10. Thus GOD ballanced his losses; for he suffered for the glory of GOD, and GOD made it up to him with advantage. Thus we have known some in our own day, that never had worldly pleasure until they were fined, forfeited, and imprisoned for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, and a good conscience: and, from that time, their *wealth* remarkably increased, whilst those who thought to enrich themselves with the *spoils of GOD's people*, visibly decayed in their worldly substance. Amongst which wicked persecutors, there were some whose then flourishing condition is now withered, even as *grass withereth on the house tops*: Their name is rotten in their graves, and their memorial perished with themselves. Whereas, some of those families who then suffered for righteousness sake, are now flourishing like *palm trees*, and *green olive trees in the house of their GOD*, Psal. xcii. 12. Those righteous persons are in everlasting remembrance, their names are powerful upon earth, riches and wealth are still in their generations, Psal. cxii. 2, 3.

Fourthly, The service of GOD may expose even your persons

cast your *bodies*, to cruel *sufferings*: from the hands of *inhuman* and *barbarous* men. Thus it happened to many of the *Old Testament saints and servants of GOD*; who, as the *apostle* tells were *tortured, scourged, stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with sword*: Made to *wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, harts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, being persecuted, afflicted and tormented*, Heb. xi. 37, 38. And what treatment have some of the *New Testament saints and servants of GOD* met with? Paul was in *stripes above measure*, hath often, *five times he received of the Jews forty stripes* more; *thrice was he beaten with rods*; once was he *stoned*; he suffered *shipwreck*, a night and a day was he in the sea; he was in *perils by waters, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the city, in perils from his own countrymen, in perils from false brethren*; in *weariness and painfulness, in watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*. 2 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. But let us not think much to undergo any piece of *suffering for his sake*, who most cheerfully suffered to much for us; especially since the scripture assures us, That *GOD will support us under all these sufferings*: as the *apostle* tells us, *GOD is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*, 1 Cor. x. 13. So that whatever we suffer in the service of *GOD*, he will bear us up under it; yea, he himself will carry the heaviest end of our burden. If ever therefore we be *humbled to suffer for Christ*, let us trust him, and lean upon him; he will carry us through; and then we shall find our sufferings to be much easier than we can now imagine them to be. Truly, Perhaps we may lose our lives in the service of *GOD*. there is nothing so dear to a man as his life, and nothing nature sets a higher value upon; for, *skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life*, Job ii. 4. Yet this is what we must cheerfully and freely part with, if God shall call for such a piece of service from us. But then, for our encouragement, he has assured us, that *whosoever shall lose his life for me, shall find it*, Matth. xvi. 25; that is, he shall find eternal place of temporal life. We must part with our lives one way or other; and can we part with them in a better cause, or on a better account, than in the defence of his cause who is the

Lord of life, who gave us our life, and maintains us in life? upon terms of the highest advantage to ourselves, that God calls us to resign our lives to him; and is not indeed to lose, but to save them. So that even the worst things in the service of God are truly for our profit, and we can sustain no real loss by them.

And thus you see, what are these things which wicked and worldly men reckon *evil* in the service of GOD: and I hope, by this time many of you are convinced, that there is no *evil* in them. Let us next consider a little the real and certain *evils*, that constantly attend the service of Satan, and of our lusts, that by setting the one against the other, we may clearly see that there is infinitely greater evil in their service, than in the service of God. Now, there are two great *evils* that people will undoubtedly meet with, if they serve the Devil and their lusts.

First, They undergo many miseries in this present life: (1.) By this means *they can never be in any state of safety*, but are from under God's fatherly care and protection. Wicked men are indeed commonly very secure, yea, senselessly and stupidly secure; but safe they are not, neither can they be; for how can they be safe who walk continually in snares and dangers, and have neither *counsel* to direct them, nor *strength* to defend them? Can they be safe that live in a state of enmity and rebellion against God, whose power and wisdom is infinite? Can they be safe whose ordinary course of life is to walk in *darkness*, and live in *darkness*, even in the *regions and shadows of death*? (2.) By serving the Devil and their lusts, men put themselves out of the favour as well as from under the protection of God. And oh! how miserable is their life, who have not the least share in the love and kindness of God, that is *better than life*? And what can they have but sorrow and misery, who have no share in that? As it is the sin of wicked men, so it is their punishment and misery, that they are *without God in the world*. They live without God, as without the fear and love of his name, and obedience to his commands. Now this is their sin; and therefore they are also without God in the world, as to his favour and good-will; and this is their misery and punishment. (3.) They are continually exposed to the *wrath* and *curse* of God, and have nothing to shelter them from all those dreadful plagues that are threatened in his word. For *God is angry with the wicked every day*. As they are every day doing that which is provoking to him, so he resents it, and

measures it up against the day of his wrath, and revelation of his righteous judgment, which shall devour his adversaries. The wrath of God abides upon them; and continual additions are made to it, by their renewed transgressions. (4.) By this means they are not only cursed in their persons, but every thing they put their hand to, and every thing they enjoy, proves a curse and a snare to them. The wicked man's table, his riches, his health, his wit, his parts, his gifts, his relations, his worldly calling, yea even his religious performances, are all a snare, a trap and a curse to him; for even *the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, Prov. xv. 8. (5.) By serving the Devil and their lusts, men commonly ruin the health of their bodies. We may every day observe what fatal mischief a riotous and intemperate life brings upon men. How does intemperance fill their bodies with humors and diseases, which a sober and religious life might have prevented? Whoremongers and drunkards, by their riotous courses, impair their health, shorten their days, and fill their bodies with loathsome diseases, which many times makes them end their wretched lives in torment and ignominy. So that I may truly say of them, as the *Psalmist* says of bloody and deceitful men, *They shall not, and commonly they do not, live out half their days*, Psal. lv. 23. They live not so long as other men commonly do live, and as they themselves might have done by the course of nature. And therefore, they who serve the Devil and the flesh, are no better than self-murderers; because they make their lives really shorter, than in all probability they might have been. (6.) All the time men are serving the Devil and their lusts, they are ruining their precious and immortal souls. And verily, you can expect no better from those that are the only enemies of your souls: For, will ever the Devil, or the world, or your lusts, do the least good to your souls? Surely no. But, on the contrary, they will destroy them for ever, if you look not to yourselves in time, and abandon their cursed service. (7.) By this means you do all you can to entail the curse of God upon your families, and your posterity after you. For, *the Lord our God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate him*, Exod. xx. 5. Now, these are all the wages that you promise to yourselves in this present life, if you serve the Devil and the flesh. But

Secondly,

Secondly, By living in the service of Satan and your lusts, you will infallibly draw down upon yourselves, not only present, but future wrath, even *eternal misery*. When wicked men die, they indeed step out of the miseries of this life; but then they fall into those that are infinitely worse: they, as it were, go out of the scorching sun into the consuming fire. They that die in the service of the Devil and of their lusts, shall find death to be but the *beginning of sorrows*, infinitely worse than those it puts an end to. Tho' there be no tears nor sorrows in the grave, to which the body goes; yet in hell, (which is the grave of wicked mens souls as soon as they die, and will be the everlasting grave both of their souls and bodies after the resurrection) day, in hell, there is nothing but *weeping and gnashing of teeth* and all manner of torments, for evermore. Therefore, let not wicked men please themselves with this, that their troubles will be all over in the grave: for the wrath of God will burn infinitely hotter against them after this life, than ever it did in their lifetime. The very frowns of God's countenance will be more terrible to wicked men in the other world, than all the severities of divine wrath and vengeance they ever suffered in this world; for, in this world they were chastised only with *whips*; but in the world to come, they shall be chastised with *scorpions*.

And now, having glanced a little at the miseries that certainly attend the service of the devil and of your lusts, let me ask you, What do you think of this service? Is it desirable or not? Or, Is it on any account whatsoever preferable to the service of GOD? or, even to be laid in the ballance with it? Are not its disadvantages infinitely greater, than all the disadvantages that possibly can attend the service of GOD? I hope none of you are so blind and foolish as to think otherwise. O that I could therefore persuade you instantly to forsake the devil's service, and enter yourselves into GOD's service.

But perhaps some of you may imagine, that though indeed the disadvantages that attend the service of Satan and of your lusts, are very considerable; yet there are such advantages to be had in this service, as may, in some measure, be sufficient to ballance these losses. Let us therefore in the next place, (according to the method formerly laid down) take a view of the advantages, and see how much they will amount to; and I shall deal very fairly and impartially in this matter. Now, all the advantages

Advantages that people can promise to themselves in the service of the devil and of their lusts, may be reduced to these heads.

First, Perhaps you may think of getting some worldly gain in this service; and of growing more rich and wealthy than the others. But this is not always the reward of wickedness, neither are riches always the wages of unrighteousness. All the devil's servants are not rich; but some of them are as poor as the poorest of GOD's servants. The devil indeed may shew men, but can neither give them the kingdoms of this world, nor the glory of them: *For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*, Psal. xxiv. 1. And the devil being a liar and a disorderer from the beginning, he is indeed very liberal in his promises, but constantly fails in his performances. He promises men great things, if they will fall down and worship him; all which are nothing in reality, but mere phantoms and shadows, with which he deceives the simple and unwary, or rather people deceive themselves with vain expectations. But, suppose the devil should, for once, be as good as his word, and give a man abundance of the good things of this life, (which, I say, is not in his power to do) where would be the profit? This is but a small recompence for the loss of the soul, the loss of Christ, the loss of Heaven and eternal salvation: *For what can a man profit, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*, Matth. xvi. 26. On casting up his accounts, will he not find himself at an infinite loss by the bargain?

Secondly, You may, perhaps, promise to yourselves in this service, *sensual pleasure and delight*. Many people fancy, that to make serious religion their study, is to live a dull and melancholy life in the world; and that they who live *as they list*, live a pleasant and merry life. But, pray you, what are all these pleasures that carnal and worldly men indulge themselves in? Are they any other than what they enjoy, in common, with the brute creatures? Nay, the beasts enjoy these sensual delights in a higher and more exquisite degree, than men can do. And, what tho' the pleasure of sin may tickle your fancy for a while? You shall pay dear for them afterwards. For, as Solomon observes, *Though bread of deceit be sweet to a man, afterwards his belly shall be filled with gravel*, Prov. xx. 17. When the sinner's

ner's conscience is awakened, and he finds himself cheated, how painful and uneasy will these pleasures then be to him? Will they not be *bitterness* to him, when he comes to reflect upon judgment to come? Nay, it very often happens, that wicked men have but little *pleasure* in their sinful ways, though they dissemble and love to put a fair face upon things. Sometimes they are under deep convictions and horrors of mind, or under some great outward trouble; and then they strive to hide their grief, by a forced kind of mirth: Yet, in all their mirth and jollity, there is some alloy or other; sometimes, that casts such a damp upon their mirth, that all their gaiety is not able to keep it from their *heart*. Their *conscience* tells them that they have no reason to be merry, and they cannot but see the vanity of it: For, as *Solomon* again observes, *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness*. Prov. xiv. 13.

And thus I have given you an account of the very best things that are to be had in the service of *Satan* and of our *lusts*: and I hope, you see, they are things but of very small consideration, mere trifles and shadows, not worth the naming. There is truly so little to be had by this cursed service, that it is a wonder any should be so mad as to continue in it, and more a wonder that any should be fond of it. I must now shew you something of the real advantages that do most certainly attend the service of *G O D*. And here you shall see what a vast odds there is between this service and the other.

The advantages that attend the service of *G O D*, are both many and great, such as I shall not pretend to give you a full description of; for that surpasseth the skill of *angels* and *men*. However, I shall hint at a few things on this head. They are either such as belong to *this life*, or the *life to come*: For, *godliness hath the promise of both*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Those of them that relate to *this present life*, are either such as concern the *body* and *outward estate*, or such as concern the *soul*. Those that relate to our *bodies*, I think may be reduced to these *five heads*.

First, By serving *G O D*, faithfully, we shall secure to ourselves, *a competent provision of the good things of this life*. *Bread shall be given us, and our water shall be sure*, Is. xxxiii. 16. We shall want nothing that is really necessary for us, and we shall have every thing that *G O D* sees good for us: He will see

with food convenient for us, and clothe us with raiment also : we shall be fed with the finest of the wheat : we shall have best of earthly comforts bestowed on us, and also plenty of ; providing G O D sees that such things will any way advance the interest of our souls. *The earth is the Lord's, and the things thereof*, Psal. xxiv. 1. And therefore, want who will, that are G O D's true servants and people shall not want ; fast food and raiment. They need not be anxious *what they eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewith they shall be clothed* ; for that G O D whom they serve, knows that they need such things. It is true, that the devil's servants sometimes have a larger portion of earthly good things, than many of G O D's servants have ; but what the servants of G O D have, though it be but small, is really more than all the abundance of ungodly things because, they have the blessing of G O D with it, and contentment in the use thereof. Now the blessing of G O D maketh And godliness with contentment is great gain. This made us prefer, even the penury of the godly man, to the plenty of the wicked. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than riches of many wicked men*, Psal. xxxvii. 16. Though a man's worldly portion be never so small, it is better than a wicked man's, though never so great : for it comes from a better hand, even from a hand of special love, and not from a hand of common providence : 'Tis enjoyed by a better title : God gives it him by promise, it is his by virtue of his relation to him, the heir of all things : and it is put to a better use ; for satisfaction to him by the blessing of G O D.

Secondly, All G O D's servants are under his continual protection. Almighty Arm of J E H O V A H defends them. He is their place, their high tower, their strong rock, their city of refuge, and the strength of their salvation. He will deliver them from six troubles. and in seven no evil shall come nigh them : *For the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe*, Prov. xviii. 10. The strength of this tower is sufficient to protect them in all their dangers : for who is he ? who are they that will harm us, if we be followers of that which is good ? 1 Pet. iii. 13. None can do it, without exposing themselves to the wrath of a holy and jealous G O D.

Thirdly, The service of G O D is the best method we can follow,

to secure ourselves in a *state of bodily health*. That is a remarkable word you have to this purpose, *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil: It shall be strength to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*, Prov. iii. 7, 8. The prudence and temperance, the sobriety and righteousness, the calmness and composure of mind, the good government of our passions and appetites, which religion and the laws of GOD teach us, have all of them a kind of natural tendency, not only to the prosperity of our souls, but to the health of our bodies; which in itself is no small blessing, and without which, all our other outward comforts are but unsavoury and tasteless.

4thly, It is an excellent way to attain to honour and respect among men. Indeed, as was observed before, it many times comes out, that the people and servants of GOD are hated and despised in the world. Yet, I say, religion is the true way to honour, for it has brought many to the height of worldly grandeur. So it is the intrinsic excellency of true piety, that many times it conciliates respect, even from the most graceless and profane. GOD says concerning the people of Israel, *Since thou wast despised in my sight, thou hast been honourable*, Isa. xliii. 4. So long as the Israelites were steadfast in GOD's service, they were the greatest and most renowned people in the world, and had the ascendant of all the kingdoms round about them: but so soon as they forsook GOD's way, they turned base and contemptible, and were brought under bondage to those that had formerly been their servants and vassals.

5thly, This service is the best way to secure to us a long life in the world: For GOD has promised to satisfy his servants in this way, Psal. xci. 16. If we be GOD's faithful servants, we shall live long enough, and when we die, we shall be full of days: we shall continue in the world, until we have done our work, and are ready for heaven; and is not that long enough? We shall never leave this world, so long as GOD has any service for us: And who would desire to live one day longer? And you see, how much the service of GOD tends to our welfare and interest.

Secondly, Let us next consider, how much it tends to the interest of our souls. And, First, It will secure to us the gracious presence of GOD: So that wherever we go, GOD will be

; for he hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. ii. 5. And how blessed they are, who walk in company with GOD, and that dwell in his presence, who can sufficiently desire? In one word, this is a blessing that will sweeten all our other comforts: Nay, it will even sweeten all our crosses; it will make every trial easy, and every affliction light. So that, if we have GOD graciously present with us, we need not care, tho' we were banished to the most remote and desolate corner on earth: for his presence will turn a waste howling wilderness into a pleasant and fruitful land, and will turn a dark and noisome dungeon into a pleasant palace. What made Paul and Silas to sing psalms, when they were shut up in close Prison, had their feet made fast in the stocks, and knew not but they were to be brought forth next morning, to a public and ignominious death? Was the gracious presence of GOD with them. And what, at this, made many of the primitive Martyrs sing in the midst of those flames that consumed them?

2dly, GOD gives his Spirit to lead and direct his servants in all their ways: the best of GOD's people are sometimes in such straitening circumstances, that they know not what course to follow, or what hand to turn them to: but he who leads the blind by a way they know not, leads them in those paths, wherein wayward men, tho' fools, shall not err, Isaiah xxxv. 8. What the Psalmist, assuredly, promised to himself, the same may every true servant of GOD, with the same assurance, promise to himself: *Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel and afterwards receive me into glory*, Psal. lxxiii. 24. And what tho' the servant of GOD is sometimes left to himself? this is only for trial, to let him see his own weakness, and the need he hath of a constant and entire dependance upon GOD. And that too, only for a small moment. Nor does he leave any of them altogether, tho' he may leave them in part; but is evermore at hand, as it were within call, and ready to support them, that their faith fail not.

3dly, This excellent service will secure to us, the sanctified use of all the administrations of Providence that happen to us. Whatever we meet with in the course of Providence, shall be for the good of our souls, and help forward our eternal salvation, according to that of the apostle; *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love GOD; to them that are called according to his purpose*, Rom. viii. 28. The greatest crosses and

sharpest trials we can meet with, in this valley of tears, shall bring some good to our *souls*. Whatever dispensations of Providence are under, be they reproaches or sickness, be they the death of our best relations, or the loss of liberty, be they the loss of our estates, or our native land, be they persecution or torments, be they hatred or afflictions; nay, tho' it were spiritual desertion, we shall, in the issue of it, be what it will, get some good to our souls thereby.

4thly, If we are GOD's faithful servants, *his ear shall be open to us*. We reckon it no small privilege to have the ear of a Prince, or some great person: what then must it be, to have the ear of GOD? Our blessed Lord hath assured us, *That all things whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive*, Mat. xxi. 22. GOD will not deny his servants the requests of prayer, nor shall the expectations of faith be frustrated. O what an excellent and desirable privilege is this! What is it that we want, we may have it from GOD: he can deny us nothing that is necessary for us, if we are his faithful servants. *Let us ask, and we shall receive; let us seek, and we shall find; and let us knock, and it shall be opened unto us*. In all our darkneses and difficulties, in all our trials and temptations, in all our distresses and sufferings, let us call upon him, and we shall find him ready to help and relieve us.

But then, besides all these advantages, both with respect to our souls and bodies, that we shall reap by the service of GOD, his service shall at length bring us to the enjoyment of eternal good things: Such as *eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive*, what they are. You have heard in part what the happiness of the people and servants of GOD is: but there is a far more excellent felicity reserved for them in the life to come. Here they receive but the earnest of their wages; the full payment is reserved for their glorified and triumphant state; the happiness of which state infinitely transcends all that the tongue of angels and men can say of it. Nay, it transcends even the very faith of the believer: for the saints, entering into their heavenly inheritance, are said to enter into the joy of their Lord, Mat. xxv. 21, And who can describe, nay, who can so much as comprehend, what or how much is included under that expression? what the Queen of Sheba said concerning the wisdom of Solomon, when he had resolved all her hard questions.

the same shall the saints be obliged to say concerning their heavenly inheritance, *the one half was not told them*, nor indeed can

and now for application: having given you some account, of the *seeming advantages*, and the *real disadvantages* of service of *Satan*, and our *lusts*; and having likewise given some account of the *seeming disadvantages*, and the *real advantages* that attend the service of *GOD*: after such a fair state of the matter, I think I may safely put it to the choice of every considering person here present, to *chuse whom they will serve*. Whether will ye serve *GOD*, or the *devil* and your *lusts*? I am sure, if you consider things aright, you will never be so foolish, as to prefer the latter of these to the first. Whether will you be *seemingly happy* for a *little time*, and *really miserable* forever? Will you be *really happy* in *time*, and *completely happy* to *eternity*? This is the true state of the affair; for if you chuse the service of *Satan* and of your *lusts*, the most and the best you can give to yourselves is, to live a life of carnal mirth and pleasure for a while, a very short while, perhaps not for many days, in this world; and then be punished with *everlasting destruction*, from the *presence of the Lord*, and from the *glory of his power*. If you chuse the service of *GOD*, and be faithful and constant in it, ye shall live a life of *real joy* and *pleasure* in this world, and at last enter into those *mansions of glory* that are above; where you shall be, forever, as happy as heaven and hell, yea, as happy as *GOD* himself can make you. What I have said upon this head already, shall save me the labour of making any arguments, to persuade you to chuse the service of *GOD*. I therefore conclude with these three directions

1st, If ye would chuse the service of *GOD*, then chuse it immediately: *Chuse you this day whom you will serve*. You must not put off this choice till to-morrow; for you know not what may bring forth: your time is uncertain, and so is your portion of grace. Perhaps this is the last call that some of you may ever get: And what will become of you, if you do not answer it? Some of you have slighted many calls of this kind; and have continued forty or fifty years, and perhaps more, in the service of *Satan* and the *flesh*: And is it not now time to leave that cursed service? You that are aged people, who

who have already one foot in the grave, it is more than time that ye were seriously minding the concerns of your souls, and of another life. Your sun is almost set; hasten therefore to hold of the path of life. I am sure there never was one that repented his too soon chusing the service of GOD; but thousands have repented their chusing it too late. Hasten therefore I say, to leave the service of the *devil* and of your *lusts*: for the longer ye continue in that wretched service, you will be the more indisposed for the service of GOD. Oh! that people should be fond of their own ruin! Will you but act like rational men, and do not suffer yourselves to be imposed upon by him, who was a *liar and a murderer from the beginning*; and who intends and pursues nothing more than the eternal ruin both of your souls and bodies. Is it not strange and lamentable, that people should give more credit to what the *father of lies* says, than they do to what the *GOD of truth* says?

2dly, Renounce the service of *Satan*, and of your *lusts*, if you would chuse the service of *GOD*: for it is impossible that you can serve both these masters. *Joshua* tells the *Israelites*, if they did chuse the service of *GOD*, they must instantly put away the *strange gods that were amongst them, and serve the Lord only*. Josh. xxiv. 23. God will by no means admit of any rivalry, and therefore, if you resolve to serve the Lord *Jehovah*, you must presently renounce all competitors with him, and leave him alone. Do not imagine that you can serve *GOD* and your *lusts* too: for if you do not quit the service of the *GOD* will have none of your service.

3dly, You must chuse the service of *GOD*, forever, I mean all the days of your lives. Some people enter into the service of *GOD* only for a while; they continue no longer in it, than a few days, or at most a few weeks after they have been at the *Lord's table*: they soon run away from his service, and fall back again to the service of the *devil*, and of their *lusts*. God will one day be avenged on all them, who thus play fast and loose with him. Chuse you therefore this day, whom you will serve, forever: and do not engage in the service of *GOD*, unless you are sincerely resolving, through grace, to be *faithful and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; being faithful to him, even unto the death*. Beware of saying to the *lusts* and to *Satan*, as *Abraham* said to his servants, while

as going to offer up his only son *Isaac* in sacrifice to G O D ;
harry ye here, till I and the lad go yonder and worship, and come
gain to you : for if you enter into the service of G O D, you
 must persevere in it, though it should stand you never so dear.
 and thus I have this day set before you life and death, the
 blessing and the curse : life and the blessing, if you shall indeed
 love the Lord, and serve him ; but death and the curse, if you
 shall be so foolish, as to continue in the service of the *devil* and
 your *lusts*. I would fain hope, that at least such of you as are
 to sit down at the *Lord's table*, are sincerely resolving with this
 holy man *Joshua*, in the latter part of that verse where my
 text lies, that whatever others do, *as for you and your houses,*
we will serve the LORD.

Now G O D himself direct you to this choice.

XX

S E R M O N IV.

After the LORD's SUPPER.

Of Stedfastness and Diligence in the Service of G O D.

P S A L M CXvi. 16.

O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant, and the
Son of thy Handmaid, thou hast loosed my Bands.

TO show you the connection of these words with what goes
 before, I need ascend no higher than the twelfth verse of
 this *Psalms* ; where you will find the holy *Prophet* speaking, as
 we that was studious and solicitous how to express, in the most
 significant manner possible, his gratitude to G O D, for some
 signal deliverance he had lately received : *What shall I render to*
the Lord, for all his benefits towards me ? The meaning is, What
 shall I render to G O D, that will be to him an acceptable ac-
 knowledge-

knowledgment of a grateful mind, for this and all the other favours I have received from him? Having seriously communed with his own heart about this matter, he resolves upon three things, which should be the sincere resolution of every one of us, who have been at the *Lord's table*. (1.) He resolves, that he will, in the most devout and solemn manner, offer up his prayers and praises unto GOD, *ver.* 13, 17. (2.) That he will make conscience of paying his vows unto the most High, and make good what he promised to him, even the engagements he had laid upon himself in the day of his distress, *ver.* 14, 18. (3.) That he will oblige himself to be the servant of GOD all his days: *O LORD, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, &c.*

In which words you have two general parts: First, The *Psalmist's* pious resolution: *O Lord, truly I am thy servant*. I profess to be so, I chuse to be so, I purpose to be so, I promise to be so, I reckon it my truest interest to be so, I will rejoice to be so, and I will always glory in it, as my chief and greatest honour. To express the sincerity of his purpose, he says, *truly I am thy servant*, i. e. Thou who knowest all things, knowest that I am hearty and upright in this matter. And he repeats it, as a thing he took particular satisfaction in the thoughts of, and was resolved, thro' grace, to abide by, all the days of his life: *Truly, Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant*: I will live and die in thy service. 2dly, You have here the motive that induced *David* thus to become the servant of GOD; and these were two. (1.) The consideration of his birth: *I am the Son of thy Handmaid*; which may be understood of his being the son of a godly mother, who herself was devoted to the service of GOD, and had devoted him to it from his childhood. It is a great privilege to be born of godly parents, and to have a religious education. This, often, by the blessing of GOD, is made the means of a holy life. Indeed, grace goes not by generation: but they who have had the advantage of a pious education, are under greater obligations to serve GOD, than others; and they shall, of all others, receive the greatest condemnation, if they become graceless and profane. Or, it may be understood of his being born within the pale of the visible church, which is *the house of the living GOD*; so that he was as a servant born within the house of GOD, and therefore

bound to serve him faithfully all the days of his life. (2.) The consideration of GOD's having rescued him out of the hands of his enemies : *Thou hast loosed my bands.* As if he had said, having redeemed me from my enemies, thou hast a just and indisputable right to my service, and therefore I resolve and engage to be thy servant.

That which I am to insist upon from these words, is, *David's* resolution of being God's faithful servant. In handling of which subject, I shall show you *First*, What it is to be the servant of God. *2dly*, After what manner we are to perform every piece of service to him, *3dly*, What temptations we may meet with, to draw us off from this service *4thly*, What obligations we are under to continue steadfast in it. *5thly*, I shall demonstrate to you the incomparable excellency of God's service. *6thly*, Press you to enter into this excellent service, and to be steadfast in it. And *Lastly*, I shall lay down some rules to help you to steadfastness in the service of God.

To be the servant of God implies in it four things, *First*, It implies a *subjecting* ourselves to him; as those that will be acted and commanded by him in every thing. It implies an acknowledgement of God's dominion and sovereignty over us. That he hath power and authority to rule and command us, to dispose of us, and all our concerns, as shall seem good unto him, and to require of us whatsoever he pleaseth; and that we bind and oblige ourselves, to yield an unlimited obedience to him, without questioning his authority, or so much as hesitating to obey him in any thing, tho' never so mean, and ever so hard for flesh and blood. We must oblige ourselves to *walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless*, as did *Zacharias* and his wife *Elisabeth*, Luke i. 6. We must carefully answer all his calls, whether by his word or by his providences: we must cheerfully and contentedly submit to whatsoever lot He, in his holy and wise providence, shall think fit to carve out to us; how low and despicable soever it may be; never in the least quarreling or murmuring at any of his administrations. And, in one word, we must always be ready, both to do and suffer, whatever he shall require of us.

Secondly. It implies a *devoting* and giving up ourselves wholly to God. Our bodies, with all their members and senses, and

our souls with all their powers and faculties, must be dedicated to his service. But having spoken to this head in the foregoing sermon, I must refer the reader to what I said there. However we are all bound to his service: and therefore, let us beware of alienating our selves from him; for this were the highest degree of sacrilege. Have ye vowed yourselves this day to the Lord. Be as good as your word; continue steadfast in his service, and *your labour in him shall not be in vain*: Heb. x. 38. But if any of you shall draw back, *God's soul shall have no pleasure in you*. Ye have put your hand to God's plough; and, if you look back, you are not fit for the kingdom of God: Luke ix. 62. And therefore, shall never enter in there. If you turn aside unto your crooked ways, the Lord shall lead you forth with the workers of iniquity, Psal. cxxv. 5. Ye shall have your portion with the worst of sinners.

Thirdly, It implies a punctual and devout *worshipping* of God in every religious duty. Hence, in scripture, seeking God frequently put for worshipping of him. To this purpose it is said of Anna, *That she departed not from the temple, serving the Lord with fastings and prayers night and day*, Luke ii. 37. Now we cannot be said to serve the Lord with fastings and prayers or in any other duty, unless we be sincere and devout in the holy exercises. God is a Spirit; and unless we worship him *in spirit and in truth*, our duties will be so far from being acceptable service, that they will be an abomination to him. Was *Abel's* sacrifice a pleasing service to God, whereas he detested *Cain's*? The reason was, because *Cain* offered up nothing but his bare sacrifice, having offered it up without any devotion or sincerity in his heart: Whereas *Abel* offered his heart with his sacrifice, having presented it with a soul full of devotion and of pious breathings towards God. We must by no means neglect any of the duties that God requires of us, and we must be sure to perform them, not in a hurry, but with seriousness and deliberation, otherways we cannot be accepted. Remember therefore, that in every duty you perform to God, his call to you is, *my son, give me thy heart*. Sincerity is the crown, but hypocrisy is the stain and disgrace of all the acts of piety and devotion we perform to God, and of all the acts of charity and mercy we perform to man. God loves, and is highly delighted

th truth in the inward parts ; but hypocrisy is an abomination
him.

Fourthly, It implies a pious and religious *conversation*, both
ward God and man ; a bringing forth much of the *fruits of*
holiness. And the more of these blessed fruits we bring forth,
bring so much the more glory to God, and do him the more
acceptable service. *Herein is my Father glorified*, saith our bles-
Lord, *that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8. Now, a pious
and religious conversation, lies in these two things, which at
sent I shall only name. (1.) In a conformity to the nature
God. When we are patient, merciful, just, wise, loving,
od, true, and the like. When we are patient under afflic-
s from God, and under provocations from men ; when we
of a merciful, tender hearted, compassionate, and sympa-
izing disposition ; when we are exactly upright and just in
dealings ; when we are abounding in the fruits of love to
d and our neighbour ; when we love what God loveth, and
e what he hates ; when what pleaseth him, pleaseth us ; and
at grieveth and provoketh him, grieveth and provoketh us ;
en we love God above all things ; and when we love his
ple, his laws, his word, his ordinances, his yoke, his cross,
n every other thing that hath a relation to him, and hate
ry thing that displeaseth him, then may we be said to have
oly and pious conversation. (2.) It consisteth in a confor-
y to the *will*, as well as the *nature* of God. When we
ntly comply with, and yield to every thing that God wills
either to do, or not to do : And when we do his commands
the same manner that he requires us ; then have we also a
and pious conversation. For the *will* of God is the *rule*,
well as his *nature* is the *pattern* of our holiness.

The second thing in the method is, to show you, how, or
what manner we are to perform every piece of service to
And, *first*, He is to be served with holy *dread* and *reve-*
e, or, with reverend apprehensions of his majesty and great-
his purity and holiness, and all his other perfections.
ce is that of the apostle, *Let us have grace whereby we may*
God acceptab'y, with reverence and godly fear, Heb. xii. 28.
en we are to come before God in holy duties (which is one
al way of serving him) we should seriously consider with
m we have to do. That we are approaching the pre-

fence of the heart-searching God, *before whom all things are naked and open*, and who *will be sanctified in all that come near him*. That we are approaching his presence, who is able to strike us dead; who can answer us by terrible things in his righteousness, and mingle our blood with our sacrifices. And, the whole of our conversation, we should have such high and reverend thoughts of God, as may be effectual to restrain us from every thing that is displeasing to him. It was upon this account that God acknowledged *Job* to be his peculiar servant, even because he was *a perfect and upright man; one that feared God and eschewed evil*, Job i. 1.

2dly. GOD must be served *willingly and cheerfully*. He does not at all value our service, if it be done by constraint, or with any degree of reluctancy. Hence you will find willingness and obedience joined together, in scripture; and the blessing promised only to that kind of service which is performed with a willing mind. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land*, Isa. i. 17. And you may see how David instructed his son *Solomon* to this purpose. *And thou Solomon my son, know thou the GOD of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 29. We must have a *willing mind*, that is, from a principle of love: for whatsoever we do from this principle, we do it with cheerfulness and delight. We must be volunteers in the service of GOD, and count it our meat and our drink to do his will. GOD sometimes accepts the will for the deed; but he never accepts the deed without the will. how commendable soever the thing may be in itself. What the apostle observes concerning works of charity, the same may be said of every other piece of service we perform to GOD. *Now therefore perform the doing of the commandment that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have: For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 11, 12.

3dly. We must serve him with *upright and honest hearts*. We must take special heed not to mingle hypocrisy with any service we do to God: for he is holy and jealous whom we serve. In all the service of God we must be *Nathaniels*, Israelites in whom there is no guile. We must have a straightness of heart and principles in his service: a straight mind and judgment.

the things of God, without any crooked devices; and a straight will to God, without any crooked resolutions or inclinations; for when a man's principles are even and unbyassed, his service is always acceptable to God. We must likewise have upright aims and ends in his service. That which we should aim at in every piece of service we perform to God, should be principally the glory of God; and in subordination to that, the advantage of our own souls, and the edification of others; without looking away, this, or that, or any other way: such as to be seen of men, or to raise our reputation in the world, as the hypocritical *Pharisees* did. Herein *Jehu* failed exceedingly, when he did God service, and wrought God's work, Matth. vi. 3, 5, 16. When he cut off the house of *Ahab*, which G O D purposely raised him up to do, he did not aim directly at G O D's glory, but squinted aside to the establishment of his own throne. A man may do many good things that G O D requires, and yet G O D have no regard to his service, because he does it neither from a right principle, nor directs it to a right end.

4thly, We must serve GOD *humbly*. My meaning is, though we should serve him never so punctually and faithfully, though we should be never so active and diligent in his service; yet we must not be puffed up with a proud conceit of ourselves, nor imagine that our service can merit any thing at the hand of God: For can our goodness extend unto him? Or, How can man that is mortal be profitable unto the Almighty, as a man may be profitable to himself or to another man? If we be righteous, what doth it advantage him? Or, if we be wicked, what hurt can it do to him? When we have done all we can, our blessed Lord hath taught us to say, *We are but unprofitable servants*. Nay, the most eminent servant of G O D upon earth, comes far short of what he ought to be, and of what he ought to do: For who can say, he hath made either his heart or his hands clean before G O D? The best of our service is clogged with a great many imperfections; and should our choicest performances be weighed in the impartial balance of the sanctuary, they would be found light and defective. So that, in truth, we have not the least ground to think highly of ourselves. And besides, *what have we, that we have not received?*

5thly, We must serve him only. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy G O D, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matth. iv. 10. GOD

is to be served primarily and for himself: nor must we at all serve any other, that either stands in opposition to GOD, or comes in competition with him. No idol of jealousy must be set up in our hearts, nor entertained there; otherwise GOD will reject all our service. We cannot be the servants of God, unless we put away all our *idols*, and say with repenting Ephraim, *what have we any more to do with them?* Hos. xiv. 8

6thly, GOD must be served *universally*. Col. vii. 8.; without grudging at any piece of service he shall require of us. How mean, difficult, or hazardous soever it may be. Tho' it should be to the loss of our good name, our relations, our riches, our honours, our liberty, and all our other earthly comforts. We must serve God at the expence of all these, if he shall require such service of us. And I assure you, the more difficult and hazardous our service be, it will be so much the more acceptable to God, and we shall be so much the more largely rewarded for it, providing we perform it aright.

7thly, We must serve GOD *wholly and entirely*; with the whole stream of our united faculties and affections: and that in all the pieces of service that he shall require of us. We must serve the Lord our GOD *fully*, walking in all his ways, and keeping all his commandments; without neglecting or overlooking any of them: and we must serve him in all these with the whole heart and soul. The service of God's house requires the labour of the whole man; and whatsoever we do, we are commanded *to do it heartily, as unto the Lord*, Col. iii. 23. And we are required *to be fervent in spirit serving the Lord*. Rom. xii. 11. The soul with all its powers and faculties, and the body with all its members and senses must be employed in the service of God; and all little enough. For he made both, and we must dedicate both to him. If the heart be divided between God and the *world*, or between God and our *lusts*, we can perform no acceptable service to him.

8thly, We must serve GOD *unweariedly and constantly* all the days of our lives: We must be *stedfast and unmoveable*, always *abounding in the work of the Lord*; and then our labour shall *not be vain in him*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. We must be faithful unto him, *even unto the death*; and then we shall *receive a crown of righteousness, that fadeth not away*. Remember Lot's wife; she looked but once back to Sodom; and, for that, she was turned into a pillar of salt.

to a pillar of salt : so far was God displeased with her. Ye have, this day, vowed constancy in the service of God, when ye were at the *Lord's table* : see that ye perform what ye have engaged, as ye would not draw down the wrath of the most high upon yourselves. Do not think it enough, if you be in appearance religious for a few days or weeks, but be constant and active in his service, as you have this day solemnly engaged yourselves ; and that as you would not incur the displeasure of God.

Monthly, I must not forget to put you in mind, That we must have God in and through *Jesus Christ* : For it is only upon his account, and for his sake, that either our persons or services can be acceptable to God. Our persons are vile, and the best of our services are lame and defective ; and therefore can never be pleasing to God, unless they be perfumed with the sweet influence of *Christ's* merits, and glorious intercession. In all our services, we must desire that God may look upon us in the name of *Jesus Christ*, in whom he is always well pleased : for, there is nothing in us, or the best of our services, to recommend us or them to God. I wonder how any dare presume to come unto G O D any other way, but in and through the blessed *Jesus*, the *High-priest* and *apostle* of our profession : for of *Christ* GOD is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity. GOD cannot look upon a man out of *Christ*, but he must be angry with him, and his wrath is ready to break forth against, and consume him.

The next thing to be considered, is, what are these temptations that we may meet with in the world, to draw us off from the service of G O D : and these are three principally. First, we may meet with threatenings of evil and mischief, if we persevere in the service of G O D : neither is this any new thing under the sun. *Peter* and *John* were two very zealous servants of GOD ; and when they were brought before the grand council of the *Jews*, they were threatened and commanded to speak no more, nor teach in the name of *Jesus*. Did they submit to this violence ? Or were they terrified with these threatenings ? No. They answer with a true Christian resolution ; *Whether it be life or death, we will obey God rather than man*. In the sight of G O D, to hearken unto you, more than unto man, judge ye : for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they were further threatened, they were

were let go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people, for all glorified GOD for that which was done, Acts iv. 17, 18, 19. So also Daniel was threatened to be cast into the lions den, if he would not forbear prayer for thirty days together: but instead of being moved by these threatenings, he went into his house, and with open windows, prayed thrice a day in his chamber (as his custom was) with his face towards Jerusalem, Dan. vi. 10. In like manner, the three children Shadrach, Mesbath and Abednego, were most severely threatened, if they did not quit the service of GOD, and fall down and worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had caused to be made. Did this frighten them from the service of GOD or were they thereby driven to idolatry? No such thing: hear what they say for themselves: *We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: If it be so, our GOD whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king: But if not, be it known unto thee, That we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the image which thou hast set up,* Dan iii. 15, 17, 18. Whatsoever threatenings we may meet with from men, for continuing in the service of GOD let us not be moved by these things. For GOD hath threatened us with that which is infinitely worse, than any thing that man can do to us, if we break off from his service. Let us not therefore fear them who can kill the body, and can do no more. But let us fear him who can destroy both soul and body, by casting them into hell: Yea, I say unto you, let us fear him, and keep close to his service.

Secondly, We may, perhaps, not only meet with threatening of danger, but with real afflictions and calamities, to make us weary of the service of GOD. Hence the scripture assures us that whosoever will live godly, must suffer persecution: that they must lay their account to be persecuted, and hated by men, for Christ's sake, and the gospel's. And they must arm themselves for these things: for it is through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven, Acts xiv. 22. Perhaps our constancy in the service of GOD, may expose us to the hatred and reproach of a profane world, and to all the bitter effects of their malice and cruelty. But none of these things must move, or disgust us at this excellent service: the more we suffer from men, on the account of our faithfulness

those in the service of G O D, the more kindly will he take it at our hands, and the greater will be our reward in heaven. You will find, when the two fore-mentioned apostles were beaten, because they preached *Christ*, and were dismissed from the *Sandrim*, with a strict charge, not to speak any more in the name of *Jesus*, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name, and daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and to preach *Jesus Christ*. They were punished for preaching, and discharged on their highest peril to teach any more; and yet they ceased not. They abated nothing of their former zeal and forwardness in the service of G O D, notwithstanding of all that they had met with on that account. The *priests* were willing they should preach any thing of *Christ*: but they would not so much as alter their subject, either to please them, or to avoid suffering.

Thirdly, We may, perhaps, meet with the aluring promises of worldly riches, worldly honours and preferments, or the like, to bribe us from the service of G O D. The world has proven a great snare to many people this way. *Judas Iscariot* had entered himself into *Christ's* service, and continued in it for a season, being one of the twelve disciples and apostles: but worldly advantage made him desert that service altogether. Covetousness was his master-sin, and the devil suited his temptation to it: for whenever the chief priests had bargained with him, to give him thirty pieces of silver; immediately he left *Christ's* service, and sought an opportunity how he might betray him to their hands. And the apostle *Paul* observes, That they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many sorrows and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through many sorrows, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. But let us be faithful to G O D, and constant in his service, and then we need not fear we shall have a comfortable subsistence in the world: we shall have such a portion of outward good things, as G O D sees fit for us; and who would desire more or better? And what though any of G O D's servants should be reduced to a morsel of bread, and a cup of water? even that will be sufficient to bear their charges home to their heavenly Father's house; where there is bread enough, and to spare. Nay, what though even that

subsistence should fail too? In that case their journey would be so much the shorter, and they would the sooner *enter into the joy of the Lord*; where their souls shall forever delight themselves in fatness, and they shall drink of those rivers of pleasure that are at GOD's right hand for evermore.

The next thing in the method, is, To show you what obligations we are under to be stedfast and diligent in the service of GOD. And here I hope to demonstrate to you, That these obligations are very strong and binding. And, *First*, We are under the obligation, of GOD's common *providence*, to thank him for it is *in him we live, move, and have our being*: It is he that made us, and not we ourselves: It is he that feeds us, and clothes us, and bestows on us all the good things we enjoy. It is he who recovers us when we are sick, who strengthens us when we are weak, and rescues us from innumerable dangers which otherwise would overwhelm and ruin us. That our food clothes warm us, that our sleep doth refresh us, that our food nourisheth us, that physic heals us, that armour defends us, is entirely owing to the blessing of GOD, without which none of these could have the desired effect: and therefore, we much more needs be under very strong obligations to serve that GOD faithfully, and constantly, who does all these things for us. That GOD to whom we are indebted for all that we are, and for all that we have; that GOD, without whose provident care we could not subsist so much as for one moment, but would quickly crumble into the dust, out of which we are but lately sprung.

Secondly, Our *profession* obligeth us to be the *servants* of GOD. We all go under the name of *Christians*; and our calling ourselves the disciples of the holy and blessed Jesus, binds us to serve him whose name is called upon us. Perhaps some of you who profess to be Christians, because you make no noise about religion, therefore fancy you are not obliged to make religion your study, nor are you concerned about the service of GOD, but live and walk as you please. But in this you are grossly mistaken: for were there no more to oblige you to a holy and blameless conversation, than your taking upon you the name of Christians, it is sufficient to tie you to it forever. You are to live up to the rules of the gospel, upon your highest peril: the gospel obligeth every Christian to *deny all ungodliness*

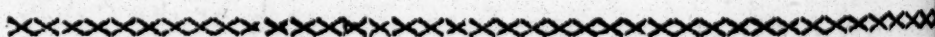
worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, Tit. ii, 12. All they that neglect the service of G O D, are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of G O D. which shall devour his adversaries. Therefore, look to yourselves, lest any man fail of the grace of G O D; lest there be any profane person among you who neglects the service of G O D: for such shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven; because, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Heb. xii. 14.

Thirdly, We are under the obligation of our baptismal vows stedfastness and diligence in the service of G O D: for what is baptism, but a solemn obligation to this? Are ye not baptized into Christ, and in baptism obliged to cleave fast to him, with full purpose of heart all the days of your lives? What the apostle Paul speaks of circumcision, For I testify to every man that is among you that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to fulfil the whole law, Gal. v. 3: The same may I say of baptism; for I testify to every man that is among you that is baptized, that he is a debtor to fulfil the whole gospel. That is, To live up to the precepts of the gospel. We are all sworn to the service of G O D in baptism; and if we are not his faithful servants, we will draw down his wrath upon ourselves.

Fourthly, Many of you have been frequently at the Lord's table: and as often as you have been there, you came under solemn vows to serve G O D; binding yourselves by an oath and a curse, to walk in all his commandments and ordinances, blameless. You have, in effect, imprecated the just vengeance of heaven upon yourselves, if ever you desert his service. You have then vowed yourselves to the Lord: see that now ye perform the vows ye have made. See that ye be faithful and constant to him, and do not alienate yourselves from his service, lest ye would not draw down his eternal displeasure upon yourselves. If you shall break such solemn vows, your last state shall be worse than your first; you shall have neither lot nor part in that great salvation, which he hath purchased and prepared for his servants: but on the contrary, you shall thereby render yourselves justly obnoxious to all the dreadful curses that are written in his holy word, and nothing can save you from them.

Fifthly, I may add, That perhaps some of you are under another

other obligation to this; even the obligation of a *sick-bed* vow. There is nothing more common, than for people under some dangerous sickness, or under some extraordinary calamity, to promise and engage, that if the Lord will spare and relieve them, they will become new creatures, and be more stedfast in his service than ever. But what becomes of these promises? Do they perform them? And are they really as good as their word? Verily many people make no conscience at all of these solemn engagements: but whenever they are recovered, and freed from the danger that threatened them, immediately they return to the same glut of sensuality, and to the same degree of profaneness that formerly they lived in: nay, sometimes they grow more wicked and profane than ever they were. O how sad is this! And O what matter of bitter lamentation is here! And truly, this is one thing most sure, that if afflictions make us not better, they certainly make us worse: If they do not bring us off from our sins, they undoubtedly harden us in them. And thus, I hope, you see, that we are under manifold obligations to diligence and constancy in the service of GOD, and have clearly demonstrated these obligations to be strong and binding.



S E R M O N V.

After the LORD's SUPPER.

The Excellency of GOD's Service.

PSALM cxvi. 16.

*O Lord, truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant, and thou
Son of thy Handmaid, thou hast loosed my Bands.*

I Have already shown you, what it is to be the servants of GOD; how or after what manner we are to perform every piece of service to him; what temptations we may meet with to take us off from his service; and what obligations we are under

er, to makd not aſſured u eſiligent n the ſervic eoif G O D.
 now proceed to ſhow you, what an excellent and deſirable
 ſervice this is, and I doubt not to make it evident to all, who
 not wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt the light, that it is moſt
 certainly the beſt ſervice imaginable: and therefore, it is our
 ue intereſt, to enter ourſelves chearfully into the ſervice of
 O D, and to cotinue ſtedfaſt and diligent it it; for indeed,
 ere is in this bleſſed ſervice, every thing that can recommend
 y ſervice to us. And,

First, They that ſerve G O D, ſerve the beſt maſter poſſible:
 he is G O D Almighty: and therefore able to fortify us
 ainſt temptations, to defend us from our enemies, to ſupport
 under our afflictions, to bring us out of all our diſtreſſes,
 d to ſtrengthen us for every piece of ſervice he ſhall think fit
 call us to. He is G O D all-ſufficient: and therefore can ſup-
 all our wants, can furniſh us for every good work. and can
 perfect whatſoever concerns us, both as to temporals and ſpiri-
 als. He is a G O D of infinite wiſd̄m: and therefore can
 direct us in all our ways, can ſolve all our doubts, and remove
 our ignorance, can guide us by his counſel, and can lead us in
 truth. He is G O D omniſcient: and therefore, we are ſure
 knows all our ſervices, he ſees all our ſecret duties, he ob-
 ſerves all our ſighs and groans that cannot be uttered, and he
 ts our tears in his bottle; ſo that none of our ſervices ſhall
 loſt. He is a G O D of infinite juſtice: and therefore, will
 ſupport our good name, and defend our innocence, when we
 are unjuſtly loaded with reproaches: he will roll away our re-
 proach, clear up our innocence, and bring us from under all
 the diſadvantages both with ſafety and honour. The like may
 ſaid with reſpect to all the other divine perfections: they all
 make good, what I undertook to prove, namely, that G O D
 the beſt maſter we can ſerve.

Secondly, The excellency of this ſervice will appear from the
 neſs of it: it is by far the eaſieſt: and therefore, the beſt and
 moſt deſirable ſervice we can engage in. My yoke is eaſy (ſays
 Chriſt) and my burden is light, Matth xi. 30. The ſervice of
 G O D is not indeed ſo eaſy and light, as if we may or ſhould
 think it light work of his ſervice: but it is light and eaſy, be-
 cauſe he hath promiſed us ſtrength to go through it; though
 the ſmalleſt piece of ſervice he requires be too hard for us alone,
 yet

yet the most weighty and difficult parts of it are easy, through the strength of divine grace. Hence is that holy boasting of the apostle Paul, *I can do all things, thro' Christ that strengtheneth me.* Phil. iv. 13. There is a kind of omnipotency (if I may be allowed to use that expression) bestowed upon all GOD's faithful servants: for as they have the *anointings of the spirit*, whereby they know all things; so they have the *strengthenings of the spirit*, whereby they can do all things. And doubtless, it is a very high privilege, that as the saints have all their work prescribed from heaven; so have they their strength from heaven to perform their work. GOD is so far from requiring service from us for nought, that he will both reward, and give us strength sufficient to do our work, if we but trust in him for it. He is not like the *Egyptian task masters*, that required brick from the children of Israel, but would not give them straw wherewith to make the brick. He that calls for brick from us, doth not only give us straw, but strength; even both hearts and hands for our work. So that you see, this service cannot but be a most easy service.

Thirdly, It is a most pleasant service, which is another clear evidence of its singular excellency. In the service of GOD, we shall find abundant satisfaction and delight; infinitely surpassing all that the enjoyments of sense can pretend to. Solomon assures us (and the daily experience of the saints confirms it) that *the Lord's ways are pleasant ways*, Prov. iii. 17. Or, they are ways of pleasantness, as some read the words; to denote the variety as well as the excellency and durableness of the pleasures that are to be found in the service of GOD. Satan, indeed, is ready to suggest, that GOD's service is the most dull, penfive and melancholy thing imaginable. And, truly, if he can but only bring us to have such frightful apprehensions of religion; I may say, he has already carried his point, in a great measure. If we will but allow him to draw the picture of religion, he will be sure to represent it with such an austere and sour countenance, with such a gasty aspect; and under such seeming disadvantages, as will make us lay aside all thoughts of it. But let us not take things as he shall represent them. Let us go to the scriptures, and to the testimony, and see what verdict the scriptures of truth will bring in concerning the service of GOD. David professes that he had more real delight in the service of GOD, than ever

worldly man had in his earthly enjoyments; or any carnal man in his most exquisite gratifications of sense. *Thou hast put wisdom in my heart, more than they, when their corn and wine abound.* Psal. iv. 7. Doubtless, the flesh must not vie with the spirit, nor must the *service* of Satan, and of our lusts, come in competition with the *service* of GOD, in point of pleasure and satisfaction, or yet in any other point whatsoever: for all the pleasures to be found in these, are but sensual and fading; but, here are pleasures, truly solid and substantial. It is true, these delights lie inward: and this perhaps is the reason, why the world speaks so wildly and so ignorantly of them. They cannot believe that there are such pleasures in religion, until they first taste them; and, verily, they shall never taste them, until they first believe them: for it must not be imagined, that those spiritual joys can fall under the cognizance of the world's carnal senses. There are incomparable delights peculiar to the *service* of GOD, which gracious souls enjoy, by themselves; and *no stranger intermeddleth not with their joy.* First, therefore try wisdom's ways, and then pass your judgment concerning them, whether they are not really ways of pleasantness. I am sure, there was never a man who tried these ways, but found them pleasant; or heartily engaged in the *service* of GOD, and had a dear thought of it. Ask the man who has made the *service* of GOD his business, and he will tell you, he would not exchange the joy and pleasure he daily finds in it, for all the pleasures of sense. Nay, even those things which the world reckon worst in the *service* of GOD, the very *cross* of *Christ*, is infinitely more sweet and ravishing to a sanctified and renewed soul, than all the delights of sense. *David preferred one day in GOD's courts, to a thousand any where else,* Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

Fourthly, The excellency of this *service* will further appear, if it be considered, that there is abundance of *peace* to be found in it: for as wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, so *all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. And the more diligent and active we are in the *service* of GOD, we shall have the larger degree of this noble peace. Perhaps, indeed, you shall have but little outward peace in the world; nay, it may be you shall meet with small disturbance and disquiet: but what need you value that, since you shall have inward peace, peace with GOD, and peace in your own consciences; such as it shall not be in the power

power of devils or men to rob you of? Would you then have peace with GOD, and peace in your own consciences; Would you have peace now in your lifetime, peace at a dying hour, and peace to all eternity? Here is the certain, and indeed the only way to it: be constant and diligent in the *service* of GOD, and you cannot miss of it. But as for such as neglect the *service* of GOD, and continue in the *service* of Satan, and their lusts, surely, *the way of peace they have not known*; and true peace is far from their tabernacles. See what the apostle Paul says on this head, *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jews first, and also of the Gentile: But glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile*, Rom ii. 9, 10.

Fifthly, The excellency of the *service* of GOD, appears likewise from this, That it is a *creditable* and truly *honourable service*. What greater honour can a man attain to in this world than to be the *servant* of the *most high GOD*, the Lord JEHOVAH, *possessor of heaven and earth*: David was as great a king as was in the world in his time; and yet, for as great as he was, he gloried in it as his special dignity and honour, that he was the *servant* of GOD: *Truly, Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid*. Some people fancy themselves to be such great and considerable persons, that they think it below them, and as it were a degrading themselves, to mind the business of religion; that belongs only to mean abject people. O what gross ignorance is here! Is it below any man to go to heaven? Or is it an honour to be damned; and to have your eternal abode with devils, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore? If with men would rather think it a discredit and disgrace (as doubtless it is) to be vassals to the devil, slaves to their base lusts and mere drudges to the world, that were a true and just way of thinking. I say then, to be the *servants* of Satan, or of the world, or of our lusts, how disagreeable, as well as hurtful is it? But to be the *servants* of the living GOD, what a glory, what a dignity and honour is it! Even the greatest that any monarch on earth is capable of. We really degrade and debase our nature, when we stoop to become the *servants* of sin, and to trudge after every vile lust: but we truly exalt our nature, when we become the *servants* of GOD, and raise them to that dignity for which they were intended at first.

Sixthly, The excellency of this *service* appears also from the *profitableness* of it; gain and advantage is the lure by which the generality of people are caught. The prospect of some small benefit is enough to recommend almost any thing to us; and we will scarce be persuaded to do any thing, unless they be induced to it by the hopes of some profit. Now, the singular advantage of that *service* whereof I speak, will appear by considering that here are the best wages that can be: there are no such wages to be had any where. Not only *shall our labour be in vain in the Lord*, but exceedingly to our advantage every way. Suppose the devil should, for once, not only shew, but actually give a man all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, as a sign of his infernal bounty, on condition of falling down and worshipping him, and so becoming his *servant*: yet that were wages infinitely short of what we assuredly may promise to ourselves by the *service* of GOD. For as GOD's servants are heirs of all the promises written in his word; so holiness hath the *promise of the life that now is, as well as of life to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. I am here entered into a very new field, where I might shew you, at great length, were it needful, that all GOD's faithful *servants* shall be blessed with a manner of blessings, blessings temporal, blessings spiritual, and blessings eternal. All GOD's servants are his friends, all his servants are his sons, all his sons are heirs, *heirs of GOD, and heirs with Christ*. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what wages GOD hath laid up for all his faithful *servants*. I will shut up this head by reading one text of scripture to which may well be called the believer's, or the *servant* GOD's charter. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is GOD's*, 1 Cor. iii. 23. You see then what large wages GOD bestows upon *servants*: And where can you expect such wages as these? The *covenant* shall be yours, the GOD and Author of the *covenant*, the Mediator of the *covenant*, the promises and provisions of the *covenant*, and all the rich purchases of the *covenant* shall be yours. The word of GOD assures us, *That he that cometh shall inherit all things*, Rev. xxi. 7. That is a promise which comprehends all the promises: and they are all in

Y

Christ's

Christ's yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of G O D. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but one jot or title of the promise shall not pass away, till all be accomplished, to the eternal comfort of all GOD's faithful servants.

Seventhly, This is a service wherein we may promise to ourselves a perfect safety. G O D takes a peculiar care of his servants, and exerciseth a special and uncommon providence about them, above what he doth about others. If ye be the servants of the living G O D, *The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about you, and deliver you*, Pſal. xxxiv. 7. He will keep you *the apple of his eye*, and has all your enemies chained up; they cannot so much as touch you, without his permission. Who ever hurts you, shall pay dear for it: For *he hath reprov'd him for the sake of his servants, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*, Pſal. cix. 14, 15. He always takes part with his people, and espouseth their quarrel, looking upon their enemies to be his enemies. And truly none that belong to GOD need wish the evil day to their enemies and persecutors; they may leave that to GOD, who will be sure to treat them as they deserve; even to him who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*. I say then, you shall be in perfect safety in this blessed service. Be faithful to G O D, and you need not be afraid of all that devils and wicked men can do against you. *Though an host should encamp against you round about, you need not be afraid; for there are more with you, than can be against you: tho' the mountains should be removed, and cast into the depth of the sea; tho' there should be never so great convulsions in the church and state, never such reelings and confusions in the world, you may be easy: nay, even though you should walk thro' the dark valley of the shadow of death, you need not fear no evil.* Your GOD whom you serve will be with you, and will be sure to take care of you.

Eighthly, Let me add in the last place, That the service of G O D must needs be a most excellent service; because by doing the faithful servants of GOD, we not only secure our interest in time, and to eternity; but we likewise secure the interest of our families: and do more for our posterity, than we can otherwise do for them; seeing we shall thereby entail the blessing of GOD upon them, for many generations to come. For GOD has promised, that he will shew mercies unto those

generations of them that love him, and keep his commandments, *Job xx. 6.* And David, who was a very diligent observer of the conduct of divine providence, especially with reference to godly, declares, he could never, in his whole observation, *the righteous man forsaken, nor his seed put to beg their bread, L. xxxv. 25.* GOD always gave them a competent allowance of the good things of this life. Religion has been the rise of many a family, and hath founded them sure, even far surer than all the carnal policy in the world was able to have done. When the saints are themselves triumphant in heaven, many of their seed and off-spring reap the fruits of their labours on earth, their piety, their prayers and charity.

And thus, I hope I have proved to your conviction, That the service of GOD is without all peradventure the best and most desirable service than can be: for here is every thing that I can recommend any service to us, GOD's servants serve the most master; and his service is the most easy, the most pleasant, the most peaceful, the most honourable, the most gainful, the most safe service; and which will secure the interest of our families. And what remains, but that you presently enter yourselves to this service? To press you to which, is the next thing in the order of the method I laid down. And indeed, there is on this occasion, one would think, to say much on this head, for what I have said concerning the excellency of this service. However, give me leave to suggest two or three things briefly, and then I shall pass you to steadfastness in this service. First, It is *high time for you to awake*, and to mind the great concerns of your souls, and of another life: *The time past of your lives, may well suffice you to have wrought the will of the flesh, and to have walked according to the lusts of the flesh;* as the apostle expresses it, *1 Pet. iv. 3.* Is it not high time for you to abandon the cursed service of Satan? Have not you been ready, *too long the workers of iniquity?* And is it not time for you to *forsake the way of the foolish, and live?* Tell me, are you resolved ever to leave the devil's service? Is it a thing either so pleasant or profitable, that you should continue always in it? And what will become of you, if you do not forsake it this time or other? Is it a pleasant thing to be led captives by Satan at his will? What reward can you expect for all your service, that way? You will lose your souls, and lose heaven,

if you persist in it. What fault have you found in the service of G O D ? Or, would you have better encouragement in any thing, than you have, and may expect in this service ? Or, the service of the devil and of your lusts to be laid in the balance with the service of G O D ? All the time you serve them you are serving your mortal enemies : but when you serve G O D you serve your best, your only, and your real friend.

2dly, *You have had many calls to forsake the service of Satan and to become the servants of G O D.* You have often been told the great advantages of G O D's service ; and therefore, cannot pretend that your not embracing of it, proceeds from your ignorance of its excellent qualities. The more calls you have entered into this service, if you still refuse, your condemnation and punishment will be the greater. May not the Lord say to you as he said to the Jews of old, *All day long, I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gain-saying people,* Rom. x. 21. O how sad is it, that people should be so hard to be persuaded to leave the service of Satan, which is so manifestly for their ruin ; and so hard to be persuaded to embrace the service of G O D, which is so evidently to their advantage ? Is it so strange, that any should give more credit to what the father of lies says, than to what the G O D of truth says ? You cast a shameful and dangerous affront upon G O D, when you discredit his word, and will not believe that his service is really so excellent and desirable. What dishonour is it to G O D, and how provoking to him, to prefer the devil's service to his ? Do you imagine he will permit up such an affront ? I assure you, he will not.

3dly, Though you have continued long in the service of the devil and of your lusts ; yet, if you will now indeed quit the service of the devil, G O D will receive you graciously, and admit you into his service. *As I live saith the Lord G O D, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live : Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die. O house of Israel !* Ezek xxxiii. 11. Though you have served the devil, never so much, and never so long, yet, if you are truly humble and penitent, G O D will receive you graciously. G O D hath been long inviting you into his service, will you be persuaded, now at length, to give your consent ? *To day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ;*

provoke him to swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest

Secondly, Let me beseech and obtest all of you, that have listd yourselves in the service of GOD, to be diligent and stedfast in service. To excite you to this, consider these three things.

1. Without stedfastness in the service of GOD, you will lose benefit and comfort of all that you have done in his service

2. Perhaps some of you have been at some pains in religion: but if, upon any account whatsoever, you shall be enticed to apostatize, all your labour hitherto will be lost. *When the*

righteous turneth from his righteousness, and doth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth; shall

he be saved? All the righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mentioned: In his trespasss that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he

has sinned, in them shall he die, Ezek. xviii. 24. If any of you

once had a profession of religion, and seemed to be somewhat; and yet afterwards shall cast off his profession. leave his

love, disown or deny the truth, forsake the service of GOD,

grow loose and profane, sensual and intemperate; all his former profession and performances shall stand him in no stead, nor

the least avail him: and shall be so far from mitigating either

his sin or punishment, that on the contrary, both his sin and punishment, will be thereby highly aggravated.

3dly, By deserting the service of GOD, you will disgrace religion, and make the righteous ways of the Lord to be evil spoken

You will thereby bring up an evil report upon this excellent service, and make others imagine that GOD is a bad master,

so hinder them from entering into his service: by which

means, you shall incur that *wo* our blessed Lord pronounced against

the Pharisees; because *they neither entered into the kingdom*

of heaven themselves, nor suffered others to enter in, Mat. xxiii 13.

Nothing proves a greater disgrace to religion, gives more harsh

reflections of the ways and service of GOD to others, more

renders wicked and profane men, in their profane courses, than

when they see the professors of religion forsake their profession,

grow loose and profane in their walk. So that if any of you,

now profess to be the servants of GOD, shall turn grace-

less and profane; this will make the name of GOD to be

despised, and religion will be wounded in the house of its

3dly, When people fall off from the service of GOD, it is either from some prospect of worldly gain, or in expectation of outward honours and preferments in the world; or for the pleasures of the flesh, or some such considerations. But, consider, what can these do for you? Can they do more for you than GOD can do? Will they be better to you, either here or hereafter, than GOD? What is it you would have, GOD, which you think wanting in him? Is it any thing that either the devil, or the world, or your lusts can make up? This world hath nothing in itself, but what it hath from GOD, and as for Satan and your lusts, can you ever think to get any good from them? What wrong hath GOD or his service done you? Did you ever receive any hurt by him? Or can you find a better service than his? I beseech you, think upon some reasonable answer to these questions, before you venture upon postasy. Let the malice of hell and earth say the worst that can of GOD and his service, it shall never justify your revolt.

I now proceed to the last thing in the method, namely, prescribe some rules or directions, to help you to steadfastness in the service of GOD: and these shall be of two sorts. Some of them shall direct you what these things are, which you must carefully avoid, in order to your perseverance; and others shall direct you what you must practise. In order to this, Of the first sort take these four.

First, Beware of pride and self-conceit. Let no man think himself more highly than he ought to think, Rom. xii. 3. For assure you, the lower thoughts you have of yourselves, you are more likely to persevere in the service of GOD. GOD has threatened to resist the proud, and to cast down those who exalt themselves. I may say, it is the honour of GOD, to humble the proud, and it is an act of justice to lay them low, who have exalted themselves: but he giveth grace to the humble. Pride was that which turned many of the angels into devils. It was that which turned our first parents out of Paradise, and out of the favour of GOD: for Satan assaulted them by that very way by which he himself fell. And we are never more apt to separate from GOD, than when we are proud, and highly opinionative of ourselves. When we are exalted above measure, we can scarce escape falling into the snare of the devil.

meek and lowly in heart, and to have an humble opinion of ourselves, is the first lesson we should learn in *Christ's* school. *John of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matth. 29. And until we learn this lesson, we can scarce learn any thing to purpose.

Secondly, Beware of *spiritual sloth*. Upon the one hand, you must not trust too much to yourselves, nor to your duties; and on the other hand, you must not neglect to do the utmost you can in religion. Many people can be at no pains at all in religion: they would fain go to heaven; but they cannot think of setting themselves to much trouble, to get there. Does not the blessed Lord assure us, that the *kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*, Mat xi. 12. You will not grudge to sweat, and toil, and weary yourselves, to get the kingdom: and will ye not be at as much pains to get heaven? GOD usually helpeth the industrious: but he abhorreth the slothful and sluggish. We really hazard our talents, when we do not employ them; and to let our graces lie asleep, is the way to starve, but can never be the way to nourish and improve them. If we leave GOD to do all, he will leave us to ourselves; and then we will be able to do nothing: and if we fold our hands together, we cannot expect his hands shall be stretched out to our assistance. But if we *arise and be doing*, the Lord will be with us, and strengthen us for our work and service.

Thirdly, Beware of *worldly-mindedness*. This is one of Satan's main devices, and it is a sin that destroys its ten thousands, whereas the other sins only destroy their thousands. It was this that ruined Demas, and occasioned his apostasy. *Demas hath forsaken me*, says the apostle, *having loved this present world*, 2 Tim. 4. 10. It was this that ruined Judas, and occasioned his apostasy: for he betrayed *Christ* for thirty pieces of silver: and it is this that ruineth infinite others daily. They that have their hearts set on the world, and the things of time, are not like to stand long in the service of GOD, if they meet with strong temptations: for so soon as they perceive any of their earthly comforts like to be endangered, by their zeal and constancy in the service of GOD, they presently think of quitting his service, rather than part with any of their perishing trifles; which they must soon part with forever, whether they will or not.

Let

Let us therefore endeavour to sit loose to the world, and every thing that is earthly; and then the loss of these things can be no great trouble or vexation to us. And whatever loss we suffer in the service of God, he will make up to us abundantly, in better things.

Fourthly, Beware of bad company, and keep as far from them as you can: for they will but deceive and mislead you. As much as possible, shun the society of graceless and profane people; especially shun all familiar converse with them: for they are the servants of the devil and their lusts, and therefore are unsuitable and improper companions for them that desire to prove themselves the faithful servants of God. He that walks with the wise, is wise; but the companion of fools shall perish. Prov. xiii. 20. Those that would be good, must keep good company; and they that keep bad company, are like to be bad themselves. And here what advice *Solomon* gives us stands upon this head, *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and do not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.* Prov. iv. 14. 15. In one word, let us follow *David's* example, *depart from me ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my GOD,* Psal. cxix. 115. You see, he resolved to be GOD's faithful and constant servant: and therefore, strictly charges all the wicked to keep out of his company: he very well knew what pernicious and malignant influences their example had upon many; and therefore, he resolved to guard against it himself. Our delight should be in the saints, in those that are eminent for piety: they indeed are *the excellent ones in the earth*, Psal. xvi. 3. And their prayers, example, and counsel will be of no small comfort and help to us in the service of God. But as for graceless and wicked men, they may hinder, they cannot in the least further us in it. There is nothing more infectious than bad company: and some of GOD's most eminent servants, by conversing with graceless people, have learned some bad lessons from them. *Joseph* was a godly man, one of GOD's faithful servants: and his long stay at the court of *Egypt*, where he had few or none, of any real goodness to converse with, made him learn some of the court vices; he could swear by the life of *Pharaoh*, Gen. xlii. 16. It is good and necessary for us, as much as we can, to keep out of bad company: for *evil company corrupts good manners.*

These are the things which I thought necessary to caution you against, in order to your perseverance in the service of GOD. There are likewise some things, which in order to this, you must carefully practise, six of which I shall now lay before you, and with them shall conclude this subject

First, Look well to your *hearts*, and keep them with all diligence, Prov. iv. 23 For there it is that apostasy and all other sins have their first rise: and is it not very necessary to watch the first motions of sin, the first beginnings of it, in order to crush it, in time, before it gather strength. There are but few that fall quite off from the service of GOD at first: this is a thing that commonly steals upon people gradually, and many times insensibly. Perhaps some of you may think it but a small matter, to cut short one duty, to omit another, and to be negligent in a third: but this is the way to fall quite off from your duty at long run. Some of you may perhaps imagine, there be no great danger, in entertaining sometimes a few pleasing thoughts of the world and of your worldly comforts: but this means your hearts may be soon brought to be too much upon these perishing things. Let us therefore look well to our hearts, lest the *old serpent* wind himself in upon us insensibly.

Secondly, Look well to your *faith*, as the principal grace that contributes to your establishment in the service of GOD, and without which you cannot keep your ground long. *If you will believe you shall not be established*, Isaiah vii. 9 This is a threatening or certification that manifestly implies a promise of establishment, if we do exercise our faith. The scripture says more than once, that *by faith we stand*; Rom. xi. 20. which is more than is said of any other grace. And the reason of this is this: for faith is the uniting grace, 2 Cor. i. 24. It is that which unites to *Christ*, and makes us mystically one with him; and it is our union with *Christ* which is the ground of our safety and establishment. Faith is that whereby we not only receive *Christ*, and are made members of that body whereof he is the head; but it is that likewise by which we derive all from him, *without whom we can do nothing* in the matter of religion, John 4. *And the just shall live by faith*, Heb. x. 37.

Thirdly, See that ye carry on a work of daily mortification, both in your hearts and lives. Study to get the power of sin more

Let us therefore endeavour to sit loose to the world, and every thing that is earthly; and then the loss of these things can be no great trouble or vexation to us. And whatever loss we suffer in the service of God, he will make up to us abundantly, in better things.

Fourthly, Beware of bad company, and keep as far from them as you can: for they will but deceive and mislead you. As much as possible, shun the society of graceless and profane people; especially shun all familiar converse with them: for they are the servants of the devil and their lusts, and therefore very unsuitable and improper companions for them that desire to prove themselves the faithful servants of God. He that walks with the wise, is wise; but the companion of fools shall perish. Prov. xiii. 20. Those that would be good, must keep good company; and they that keep bad company, are like to be bad themselves. And here what advice *Solomon* gives us turn upon this head, *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and do not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.* Prov. iv. 14. 15. In one word, let us follow *David's* example, *depart from me ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my GOD,* Psal. cxix. 115. You see, he resolved to be GOD's faithful and constant servant: and therefore, he strictly charges all the wicked to keep out of his company: he very well knew what pernicious and malignant influences their example had upon many; and therefore, he resolved to guard against it himself. Our delight should be in the saints, and those that are eminent for piety: they indeed are *the excellent ones in the earth,* Psal. xvi. 3. And their prayers, example, and counsel will be of no small comfort and help to us in the service of God. But as for graceless and wicked men, they may hinder, they cannot in the least further us in it. There is nothing more infectious than bad company: and some of God's most eminent servants, by conversing with graceless people, have learned some bad lessons from them. *Joseph* was a godly man, one of GOD's faithful servants: and his long stay at the court of *Egypt*, where he had few or none, of any real goodness to converse with, made him learn some of the court vices; he could swear by the life of *Pharaoh*, Gen. xlii. 16. It is good and necessary for us, as much as we can, to keep out of bad company: for *evil company corrupts good manners.*

These are the things which I thought necessary to caution you against, in order to your perseverance in the service of GOD. There are likewise some things, which in order to this, you must carefully practise, six of which I shall now lay before you, and with them shall conclude this subject

First, Look well to your *hearts*, and keep them with all diligence, Prov. iv. 23 For there it is that apostasy and all other sins have their first rise: and is it not very necessary to watch the first motions of sin, the first beginnings of it, in order to crush it, in time, before it gather strength. There are but few that fall quite off from the service of GOD at first: this is a sin that commonly steals upon people gradually, and many times insensibly. Perhaps some of you may think it but a small matter, to cut short one duty, to omit another, and to be negligent in a third: but this is the way to fall quite off from your duty at long run. Some of you may perhaps imagine, there be no great danger, in entertaining sometimes a few pleasing thoughts of the world and of your worldly comforts: but this means your hearts may be soon brought to be too much upon these perishing things. Let us therefore look well to our hearts, lest the *old serpent* wind himself in upon us insensibly.

Secondly, Look well to your *faith*, as the principal grace that contributes to your establishment in the service of GOD, and without which you cannot keep your ground long. *If you will believe you shall not be established*, Isaiah vii, 9 This is a threatening or certification that manifestly implies a promise of establishment, if we do exercise our faith. The scripture says more than once, that *by faith we stand*; Rom. xi 20. which is more than is said of any other grace. And the reason of this is this: for faith is the uniting grace, 2 Cor. i 24. It is that which unites to *Christ*, and makes us mystically one with him; and it is our union with *Christ* which is the ground of our safety and establishment. Faith is that whereby we not only receive *Christ*, and are made members of that body whereof he is the head; but it is that likewise by which we derive all from him, without whom we can do nothing in the matter of religion, John 4. *And the just shall live by faith*, Heb x. 37.

Thirdly, See that ye carry on a work of daily mortification, both in your hearts and lives. Study to get the power of sin more

more and more weakened in you, For the less corruption there is in you, you will be the more stedfast and diligent in the service of GOD: you will be the better able to stand your ground against all opposition; and will find the service of GOD more easy and pleasant to you. I assure you, there is corruption enough in the holiest servants of GOD upon earth, to pervert and mislead them, if they are not careful to get their corruptions brought under. He was a saint above the ordinary size who complained bitterly of his being *so foolish and ignorant that he was as a beast before GOD*, Psal. lxxiii. 22. There is still too much of the brute, even in him that hath attained to be somewhat more than man: and none of us are so much washed from our filthiness, while in the body, but that the relics of swinish principle in our nature would make us return to wallow again in the mire, if GOD did not, by his restraining grace keep us back; and if we are not careful to get sin more and more mortified in us. If it be considered, how much Lot lingered in going out of *Sodom*, I cannot think, but he would have looked behind him, as his wife did, unless these inclinations had been restrained, in him, by the influences of divine grace.

Fourthly, Give yourselves up to the conduct of GOD's spirit depending upon him at all times for direction and through bearing, especially in all your difficulties and trials: for every man may easily find, from woful experience, that *it is not a man that walks to order his own footsteps aright*. We are blind and cannot see the way wherein we should walk, unless we have one to direct us; and we are lame, and cannot, of ourselves walk in the right way, even though we see it, unless we have GOD to strengthen and support us. Let us therefore, *trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and not lean to our own understanding*, Prov. iii. 5, 6. Let us, *in all our ways acknowledge him and he will direct our paths*. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of GOD's wisdom, power and goodness, relying upon that for our direction in every case: for, as we can never trust ourselves too little, we can never trust GOD too much. And our temptations are very numerous: every place and condition, every company and employment, every relation, every providence, and what shall I say, every duty is full of temptation. Wherever we are and however employed, it is very hard to avoid being assaulted

with temptations; and it is yet harder many times to escape being overcome by them. In what place soever we are, we may find ourselves like the prophet in *Dothan, compassed about with a whole army of enemies*, 2 Kings vi. 14. We are surrounded with temptations: we have them on the right and on the left hand, behind and before, within and without us. Every servant of GOD hath many adversaries continually besieging him, and importunately soliciting him to apostasy. The old man within, the old serpent without, and a bewitching world around us, makes it utterly impossible for us to persevere in the service of GOD, without the conduct and strength of his spirit. *Let us then be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; and we shall be able to hold on in our way, whatsoever opposition we meet with.*

Fifthly, Be daily more and more acquainting yourselves with the holy scriptures; for they contain the instructions that the servants of GOD must walk by. And, sure I am, it is both safe and necessary for us, to be often looking into our instructions, in order to prevent our neglect of any thing that GOD requires of us, or the doing of what he has forbidden. For *all scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. The scriptures (if we be conversant with them) will furnish us with the best rules how to manage ourselves in every state and condition of life, and under every administration of providence. They prescribe infallible remedies for every spiritual malady we can labour under: and we can never be at any great loss how to behave ourselves, whatever difficulties and trials we may meet with; if with David we can say, *Thy testimonies are my delight. Thy judgments I have laid before me*, Psa. cxix. 24, 30. O the singular advantage of being well acquainted with the scriptures! they will be an excellent guide to direct you in every step of your pilgrimage, and prevent your taking a false way, or getting a false step in the right way. So long as the servants of GOD are in the world, they are not only in a strange country, but in their enemies country; where the devil, the world and the flesh, will be continually disturbing and assaulting them: but the scriptures are an excellent guard to defend us. And there-

fore, the apostle mentions *the sword of the spirit*, which is the word of GOD, among other parts of the Christian's armour Eph. vi. 17. A sword is a weapon that hath a double use: we may either act offensively or defensively with it, as we find occasion. By the sword of the Spirit, we may both defend ourselves from the blows of our spiritual enemies, and we may wound them also, Matth. iv. As you will see our blessed Lord did.

But, then, I would have you to know, that in acquainting ourselves with the holy scriptures, we are not only to read, but to search them, *search the scriptures*, says our blessed Saviour John v. 39. that is, read and meditate on them with attention, seriousness, and application. *As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. *And let the word of Christ dwell richly in you, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding*, Col. iii. 16. You must read the scriptures with honest and upright hearts, and with a desire to learn your duty from them, saying, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do*. Or, *I will hear what GOD the Lord will speak*, Psal. lxxxv. 8. I will hear what instructions, what convictions, what cautions or commands GOD will give me in his word: and if you do so, your labour shall not be in vain, for this will be the way both to rivet the word in your heart, and to make you experience the favour and efficacy of it in your souls.

Sixthly, Learn to make daily use of Christ, especially in times of great trials and violent temptations; or when you see others falling off from him. You can never expect to be steadfast, if you stand loose of Christ: but keep your hold of him, and cleave fast to him with full purpose of heart, he will help you to stand. Continue still touching, if it were but the hem of Christ's garment, and you shall thereby find virtue, that is, divine strength and influences, coming daily out of him into your souls; which will fit you for the work and service that GOD calls you to, and enable you to hold on in your way rejoicing, when perhaps others shall be wearying and giving quite over. And the more furiously you are assailed, see that you make the more use of Christ or else the temptation will overcome you. When Paul was assaulted with a most violent temptation, he was more than ordinary importunate at the throne of grace, for strength sufficient to bear him up: nay, it seems, as if he had, in a manner, lien constantly at the throne of grace, until his request was heard.

ward and granted, in heaven. *He prayed thrice that the temptation might depart from him : 2 Cor. xii. 8* And at length he had this gracious return from GOD, *My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in wickedness.* Imitate the chicken, who, when it sees the bird of prey coming, immediately runs to the dame, who covers it with her wings; so when ever you perceive a temptation coming, immediately go to GOD Christ; flee to a throne of grace, and then you shall be safe. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10.*

And thus I have directed you, both as to these things that you should avoid, and as to what you should practise, in order to your diligence and perseverance in the service of GOD. It is your part to follow these rules; and if you do that carefully, I dare say, you shall find the daily advantage of it. If these graces be in you, and abound, you shall be faithful servants of GOD. And that it may be so with you, I shall shut up all with the apostle Peter's prayer. *The GOD of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory, by Jesus Christ, make you perfect, glorify, strengthen, settle you, 1 Pet. v. 10, 11. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The End of Mr WALTER DOUGLASS's Five SERMONS.



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L O R D ' s S U P P E R .

By Mr THOMAS HALYBURTON,
Professor of Divinity at St Andrews.

S E R M O N I.

The L O R D ' s F E A S T .

O R , T H E

ENTERTAINMENTS of G O D ' s H o u s e ,

Opened from

I S A I A H XXV. 6.

*And in this Mountain shall the LORD of Hosts make unto all
People a Feast of fat Things, a Feast of Wines on the Lees, of fat
Things full of Marrow, of Wines on the Lees well refined.*

To introduce you to these words, we must look back to
the close of the preceeding chapter, where we have a pro-
phesy of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, his victory and conquest over
his enemies, and his *glorious reign in mount Zion and Jerusalem*,
that is, the New Testament church in Old Testament language)
before,

before, or in presence of *his antients*, his ministers and servants who are in his court, what courtiers are in the courts of prince attendants and servants, who are employed in subordinate administrations, receive and execute his commands, stand in his presence, and are witnesses of his glory.

Now, the prophet being deeply affected with the manifestation of the *Lord's* glory, in punishing or chastising his own people overthrowing his enemies, establishing his throne, and reigning gloriously : he cannot forbear to celebrate this in a song, contained in the first five verses of this chapter.

After this song is over, in the words of our text, and in the subsequent seven verses, he returns to a prophetic description of the happiness of the subjects of *Christ's* kingdom in the gospel day, under his government.

Of this their happiness, the Spirit of GOD here, by the prophet, condescends on three notable instances.

(1.) There is a great entertainment designed for them, in the sixth verse, which is our text.

(2.) There are clear and full discoveries of the council of GOD, for their salvation, designed for them, with a removal of all those *vails*, by which their light into those things was formerly obstructed, viz. 1. The *vail*, or covering of natural darkness on their minds : And, 2. The *vail of dark shadows* giving but an *obscure discovery*, both are to be removed, *verse 7* and accordingly now are so, as the New Testament plainly declares.

(3.) A more complete victory over their enemies, their *spiritual enemies*, is promised, *verse 8, 10, 11, 12*. Death is *swallowed up in victory*; and *Moab*, under which name all enemies are couched : *Moab*, I say, is to be *trod down*.

In the midst of this last branch of this prophecy, there is interjected, *verse 9*, a prophecy of the joy that the evidence of GOD's mercy, love and faithfulness, in accomplishing all the things should afford, after long delay and many obstructions to the disappointment and confusion of enemies, who were braiding them with their expectations, and their full establishment, over the belly of all their fears, in the experience of enjoyment of what their own unbelief, and the suggestions of enemies would have had them, to the discredit of the power of GOD, to despair of. Now, says the prophet, in that

the church will triumph time about, and on better grounds. The enemies insults were a triumph before the victory; but the church will then speak with them in the gate, and answer all their suggestions by plain convincing proof. *And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this G O D is our G O D, &c.* But to return to the text.

This sixth verse which we have read, was, to the church old, a prophecy, or promise, under figurative expressions, of that rich provision of spiritual mercies which the Lord designed to prepare for, and entertain his people with, in gospel-times, and by gospel ordinances.

What was to them a *prophecy* and *promise* of good things, at distance, is to us, partly, a *history* of what the *gospel church* long enjoyed in *gospel institutions*, and what is now still in them provided for us, if we are the children of *Zion*; and truly they are a *promise* to all the Lord's people, now more especially, when they attend and wait on the Lord, in the institution of worship, as you this day do; and that of good things ready prepared for you, if you are such, and presently to be offered to, and bestowed on you.

Here then, you see what entertainment you are invited to, when you are called together to wait on the Lord this day, in the gospel ordinances of worship; and more especially this ordinance of the Lord's Supper claims relation to this promise, coming nearest to the similitude made use of in the text, to mention other reasons which might be offered.

You cannot avoid owning, that here is an account of a great entertainment, and that it is very proper to hear of this now, when there is an assembly gathered together to celebrate a feast: but perhaps you may have some doubt about your concern in that entertainment mentioned in the text. Well, if it so, we allow it reasonable that you should be satisfied on this point; but this day we have much work on our hand, and being very precious, we must therefore waive the usual method, and chuse that which suits the text, may best remove our difficulties, and withal bring all home to your consciences, to the design of this meeting. Well then, to come presently to the matter, the text suggests an answer to some questions, that you may want to be satisfied about.

A a

Here

Here is mention of an entertainment, may you say: but desire to know,

- I. Whether it is to be expected?
- II. Is it certainly to be had there?
- III. Who is the Provider of it?
- IV. How is it prepared?
- V. For whom is it designed?
- VI. What sort of an entertainment is it?
- VII. What are the materials that are provided.

Now, if we can inform you about these things, I think may, by that time, have little else to desire, but to step forward if you are among the called, and eat chearfully, and be thankful. Well, the text suggests answers to each of those.

I. Would ye know where this entertainment is to be expected? The text answers, *It is on this mountain.* If still you ask, On what mountain? I answer, The context answers, It is *mount Zion*; that is mentioned in the last verse of the preceeding chapter, to which this relates. But this answer must be more particularly explained; because it is the key of the whole text that will open the way to all the rest, if it is well explained. Now to clear this to you, observe seriously the few following remarks.

1. In general observe, That the most remarkable events which of old befel the church, as to its outward condition, were shadows of the spiritual mercies designed for the true Israel of GOD. Thus their bondage in *Egypt*, deliverance there, travels through the wilderness, introduction into *Canaan*, were designed to lead unto a view of what spiritual mercies the Lord designed for his people. The application of those things in the New Testament clears this abundantly: Wherefore,

2. When the Lord, of old, did promise spiritual mercies which he designed, in the gospel times especially, to bestow, he promises them in words suited unto those things they were conversant with; and by which the Lord shadowed, darkly pointed out to them those spiritual things, under a darker dispensation; yet so as not to leave them without being sufficiently intimating that they were not to rest in those carnal things, that were but shadows of spiritual good things to come.

the generality of the *Israelites* looked no further than the letter and outward shadow. But

To come more clois, you must observe, That when the Lord brought his people out of *Egypt*, in their way to the promised land, he brought them to *mount Sinai*, that stands in the midst of a barren wilderness, a mount covered with bushes and thistles, whence it had its name. Here GOD appeared to them, clothed in such manner, as might contribute to fix an awe and dread of his terrible majesty upon their hearts. He ascends in fire, in blackness and darkness, with terrible lights and thunders, and the sound of a trumpet, *Exod xix: 18, 19.* And from his mouth and right hand proceeded the fiery law, *Deut. xxxiii. 2.* Mean while all the people stood trembling and quaking at the foot of the mountain, obliged to keep their distance on pain of present death without mercy, hearing the voice of words that filled them with terror, and made even *Moses* exceedingly fear and quake. This terrible manner of giving the law, and establishing the old covenant, together with the multitude of its precepts, severity of its execution, and punctual execution of them, filled them with dread, and brought them under a spirit of bondage. Now, *mount Sinai* represents the *Old Testament church*, and its end, *Gal. iv. 3, 25.*

4. After some stay here, the Lord led his people forward to *Canaan*, and brought them to *Canaan*, a land flowing with milk and honey, and brought them to the border of his sanctuary, and led them at *Jerusalem*, in quiet habitations, *Psal lxxviii. 54.* *Isaiah xxxiii. 20.* And here, for the place of his worship he chose *mount Zion*, on it he ordered the celebration of all that worship that did serve to typify, and hold out Christ as the Saviour of sinners, from the curse and terrors of the fiery law. Here the temple, by GOD's appointment was built; here was the ark, the mercy-seat, the sacrifices, all pointing out Christ the Lamb of GOD that takes away sin. In a word, hither the people went up to the testimony of *Israel*, to pay thanks to GOD. Here were the priests, the prophets, the thrones of judgment; shadows of Christ in his several offices, for the salvation of sinners from wrath. Wherefore,

5. This *mount Zion*, which the Lord desired for his habitation, saying, *This is my rest forever; Here will I dwell, &c.*

Pfal. xiii. 2. was a shadow of the gospel-church, in which the substance of those things, whereof they had only faint resemblances in their ordinances of worship, is to be found. This is plainly taught in the New Testament, particularly in that of the *Galatians*, and *Hebrews* xii. 18, 19. We are said, under the New Testament, to be come, not to *mount Sinai*, which he there repeats the description of; but to *mount Zion*, to *heavenly or spiritual Jerusalem*, that blood of sprinkling, and *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, &c. Well then, in the gospel-church, and its spiritual institutions of worship, the *mount Zion*, we have the substance of what they had only a shadow of. This leads me

6. To observe, That the place of gospel ordinances in the *mount Zion* spoken of in the text, to wit, the gospel-church, more especially the solemn ordinances of public worship hereby intended, *Zion* being the place only allotted, by divine appointment, for their celebration. This is the *city of our solemnities*, as *Zion* properly was to them of old. And upon account it is, that *GOD loves the gates of Zion, more than all dwellings of Jacob*, Psal. lxxxvii. 2.

7. You are to observe, That nothing else can be meant here than this. For, (1.) This only is that *mount Zion* in which Christ reigns before his ancients gloriously, as you heard from the last verse of the preceeding chapter, to which this relation. (2.) This is plainly a prophecy of what the church had not enjoyed, and of more eminent enjoyments than they had before, but they never had more, or so much, as in *David* and *Solomon's* time, unless it be under the gospel. (3.) This is a church for all people, not only *Jews*, but *Gentiles*. Now this is the inclosure was to be broke down, and all that frame of worship suited to uphold it, and consequently, all privilege of *Zion* where it was celebrated. (4.) This *mount Zion* must be where it can be reached by all people; which can belong to no other particular place, nor agree to any thing else, save gospel ordinances. (5.) The explication given above from the text is enough, were there no more to clear it, that it is in *mount Zion*, even the mount of gospel ordinances; and more especially this solemn ordinance of the supper; which *GOD* always had a special respect to; here, I say, it is that this entertainment spoken of in the text is prepared, here it is to hold.

8. As I hinted before, though I exclude no gospel institution, I conceive, this day's solemnity, the feast of our Lord's Supper, may plead, and be allowed a special interest in the promise, on several accounts. As (1.) In this, There is an invitation to a participation of those same spiritual mercies held forth in the text. (2.) They are exhibit under the same notion and view as a feast. And (3.) The design of their exhibition under this similitude in the text, and those signs in this sacrament, are one and the same to hold forth the Lord, as the fountain of spiritual strength, nourishment and consolation. *Fat things*, and *fine*, are suited to all these ends, and so is it in this ordinance. Here, if any where else, the Lord allows his people plenty, that may well be called a feast; others might be named, but this is enough. Well, now you have got an answer to your question, *Where is this feast to be?*

This *mount Zion* is the mount of gospel ordinances, especially public solemnities, and more especially and particular it is in this ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*.

Well, you are not come to *Sinai*, to the fiery law, to darkness, thunders and lightnings, and to the voice of words, which they who heard them once desired to hear them no more: but this day you are come unto *mount Zion*, even that mount which GOD has chosen, of which he said, *This is my rest forever. for I have desired it*: of this mount *glorious things are spoken*, Ps. lxxxvii. 3. *This is the city of our solemnity*, Isa xxxiii, 20. Out of which the *good news goes*, Isa. ii 3. Here are the *good tidings of peace proclaimed*, Isa. xl. 9. This is the place where the elect are *begotten again to a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. of which it may be said, that *this man and that man was born there, and the Highest shall establish her*, Psal. lxxxvii 5, 6. Here it is that the *Redeemer comes to them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob*, Isa. lix. 20. In *this mount the Lord is great*, Ps. xcix. 2. and out of it *the Lord shineth gloriously*, Ps. l. 2. Here *he places salvation for Israel his glory*, Isa. xlv. at the close, and *sends his people strength*, Psal. xlv. 2. *Salvation*, Ps. xiv. 7 and *blessings*, Ps. cxxviii. 5. Even *all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus*.

In gospel-ordinances, especially the word and sacraments, all these are communicated. On this mount *Zion* stands the *Lamb*, who has prepared here an entertainment this day, Rev. xiv. 1. Have ye not reason to say, How awful is this place! *This is*

none other but the house of GOD, the gate of heaven! Blessed be the Lord, that has brought me hither. But

II. If any of you move the question, *Will this feast hold?* The text answers, That on this *mount shall* this feast be made. fear not then, here *shall* be an entertainment. And to satisfy you in this, only consider the import of this little word *shall* in the text, which says to you.

1. This is not a mere surmise, a may be; but what is *purposed* and *determined*, and was long ago fixed in the intention of him who purposes and none can disannul it. *The counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*, Jer. iv. 28 : Isa. xlii. 10.

2. Nor is it merely a purpose kept secret in his own breast but it is a purpose intimated, which he has allowed, nay authorized his servants in his name to publish. Now, he is not wont to alter the word once gone out of his mouth, Ps. lxxxix. 34.

3. Not only so, but it is a promise, and this, in a sort, puts it out of his power. without unfaithfulness, to change or recede from it. His people may claim the accomplishment of his word of promise.

4. It is a promise confirmed by many other promises, of an alike nature elsewhere recorded in the word; where he records his name he has promised to meet with his people and bless them; where there are two or three met in his name, he is in the midst of them. Where his servants administer his ordinances he has promised to be with them to the end of the world. He has called us to this occasion, and invites to take eat, drink, open our mouths wide, and he will fill them.

Finally, I may add, the church has had it confirmed now by a long tract of experience. But

III. If you say, Who provides this entertainment, and is here to cover this table for us? The text answers, *It is the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth*. From whom else could it be expected?

1. To whom does it belong to provide for a family to make entertainments in a house? Is it not to the master of the family him to whom the house belongs? He is to provide for those of his own house, see 2 Tim. v. 8. Now, what the Lord will not allow of, nay blames, as hugely faulty, in a poor worm, he will not be guilty of himself.

2. To whom does it belong to make great entertainments, royal feasts? Is it not to *kings*?

3. Who is able to feast *all people*, save he who is the *GOD* of the whole earth, who challenges all the cattle on a thousand hills as his, the birds of the air the fish of the sea, nay what heaven or earth can afford; nay more, who is *GOD all sufficient*, who, if all the creation cannot afford what is enough to answer his purpose, and accomplish his promise, he can create vastly more.

4. To whom does it belong to accomplish the promises but *Jehovah*, the *GOD* that gives a being to his word and all things else.

But, methinks, I hear some poor soul surmising, "It is indeed every way worthy of him to make such entertainments, and it is huge condescendence that we hear any thing of it: But what means *his sword on his thigh*? Why is he *red in his apparel*? Why takes he to himself on a feast day this name *Jehovah Sabaoth, Lord of Hosts*? This were proper in a day of battle; but on a feast day it begets mistrust. Who can eat cheerfully with a sword over his head? Soft raiment, a sceptre of peace, garments of salvation, and some name denoting bounty, love, mercy, riches, would seem more suitable on this occasion."

I answer, All this is mistake flowing from ignorance of the reasons of his assuming this name on this occasion, which are sufficient to remove all those fears. I offer a few: Know

1. This feast is a feast of Triumph over his and your enemies; it is designed to be a commemoration of the victory he has obtained, and a pledge of your making, in due time, through him, a full conquest. Here he appears, if I may so speak, in his warrior's dress, as the *Lord of Hosts*, to mind you, that on his mount he has trodden down *Moab*, add swallowed up death in victory, and designs not to lay aside his weapons till the work is finished, and not one enemy left to occasion fear, or hinder your cheerful use of what he provides for you. Be of good cheer then, he has overcome the world, overcome your enemies.

2. You are to be entertained this day, as one part of this royal feast, with the spoil of enemies, sin, Satan, and the world; you

you are called, as it were, to *eat the flesh of kings, princes, and great ones*. Ezek. xxxix. 18, 19. This we may allude to: You are called together, to satisfy yourselves with a view of your enemies destruction, the stroke that has fallen on them, and is to fall on them; he appears as the *Lord of Hosts*, to let you know to whom you stand indebted for what is done, who brought home those spoils you now share in, and by whom you are to expect the completing of the victory.

3. You must know that this is, as *David* speaks, *Psal. xxiii. 5. A table covered in presence of your foes*. You have many lookers, sin, Satan, and the world, who regret your prosperity; and if it were in their power, would mar the joy of this day, and mingle your wine with your blood. Well, therefore does he appear as the *Lord of Hosts*, to maintain the solemnity of your feast, and to secure you against the fears of your enemies, I mean, despondent fears; and to assure you, that upon all the glory there is a defence; and that upon all the assembly in mount *Zion*, he will create a cloud, Isa. iv. 5.

4. All of you who are invited to this feast, are listed soldiers engaged in a warfare, and he appears as the *Lord of Hosts*, to let you know, that you are to fight under his banner, and he will muster the host of the battle, and means not to let you go alone, and to engage, and encourage, and strengthen you, he has invited you to his table. Well then, you see, my friends, the eating at his table is in effect a military oath, and imports an engagement to fight under him, and follow where he leads the way.

5. He appears this day as *Jehovah Sabaoth* the *Lord of Hosts*, to give you an assurance, that the promises of the covenant shall be accomplished, notwithstanding all the obstructions that may or may seem to lie in the way: he is *Jehovah* the faithful God that gives a being to his promises. He is the *Lord of Hosts*, to let you know that enemies shall not be able to stand in the way, or hinder him; for he is strong that executes his word, the *Lord of Hosts*, who will not fail, nor be discouraged, till he has brought forth judgment unto victory, Joel ii. 11.

6. He assumes this name, the *Lord of Hosts*, to let you know that you must not, this day, like those mentioned *Jude* 19. *Feed yourselves without fear*; the war is not over: but in this encouraging repast, you must immediately prepare for battle.

Now, you have heard who has prepared this entertainment for you, it is the *Lord of Hosts*, even our Lord Jesus Christ the Captain of salvation, who has trode the wine press alone, and is glorious in his apparel died in the blood of enemies, and who has on his vesture and thigh a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, who will reign till he has put all enemies under his feet, Isa, lxiii 1.

IV. Why is the *making* of this feast ascribed to him? Upon what accounts is he said to *make* this feast? I answer, upon good, say, the best reason imaginable: For,

1. The first project of it, bred, if I may so speak, in his breast. wherein is love, not that we loved him, but he loved us, we durst not have thought, far less durst we, if it had not sprung of himself, proposed such entertainments. The prodigal durst not have mentioned the fatted calf, Luke xv.

2. As he formed the design, it is all on his own expence we had got that portion of goods that was ours by creation right, and spent them with riotous living: but lo here out of his own sovereign grace, mercy and bounty, he has provided a feast for our entertainment.

3. His wisdom has the ordering the disposal of the whole where he has prepared and he orders every thing about it; what every ones portion who shall sit, and who shall serve, see Prov ix 2, 3. &c.

4. He has prepared the house, the palace where it is provided. It is he that has reared up the glorious gospel-church and institutions. *Wisdom has built her house, and hewen her seven pillars*, Prov ix. 2.

5. He has taken upon himself the principal charge of the invitation of the guests at this feast, as you see *Mat. xxii 11*. it is that spies out the man that wants the wedding garment.

6. He it is that entertains the guests, welcomes them, and invites them to eat of what he has prepared, *Eat O friends, drink, drink abundantly O beloved*. Cant v 1.

Finally, He abundantly blesses their provision and satisfies them to the full. Upon all these, and other such accounts, it appears how justly he may be said to *make* this feast. But we go on to another question,

Will you say, But for whom is this entertainment prepared?

pared? I answer, the text tells *it is for all nations*, for a people.

1. It is not for a few special favourites, a few minions, to the secluding others; but it is *for all people*, the whole church of Christ of whatever size.

2. It is not narrowly confined to *Israel* according to the flesh the seed of *Jacob*, one particular nation, nay, but even for Gentiles, who dwell in the outmost ends of the earth, even in the islands of the sea. Blessed be GOD for this, of old it was not so: but now it is for *all people*, for every nation.

3. This table is not covered for the rich, for them that can repay him; but for the poor, the needy, and they especially are invited. He will not be worse himself than what he requires his to be, and to do, Luke xiv. 14.

4. In a word, it is *for all people, every one* that needs, that will come, that will be at peace with him, that will submit and list himself, whatever they have been, even the worst prodigal, if strong necessity has but brought them to see their need, to think themselves, and return; they are not secluded, but heartily welcome to eat of this noble provision. Well then, hear O hear! poor, needy, hungry, thirsty, starving souls in *Scotland* in *Ceres*, you are called to a covered table; none are secluded but cursed *Moabites*, unreconciled enemies, who are to be trampled down.

VI. If any of you say, But what sort of an entertainment is this? The text answers, *It is a feast*. This is its nature more specially considered. Well my friends,

1. What *the Lord of Hosts* has prepared for you in the gospel and this day, in this ordinance, is not an ordinary meal, such as his people have always had, nor is it a narrow allowance, but it is a plentiful entertainment, *a feast*.

2. It is a great entertainment; *feasts* are wont to be so, and indeed, if we compare it with what the church of old had, it may well be called *a feast*. They wanted not what was absolutely necessary: but GOD has *provided some better things for us*. Heb. vi. 40. 'Tho' we are the younger brother, yet *Bemini*-like, we have got the double portion.

3. This is a *feast*, not only that may simply preserve but what may afford a *pleasant and comfortable life*. We may say with the Psalmist, *Our cup runneth over*, Psal. xxi.

Christ came, that his people might have life, and have it more abundantly, John x. 10.

4 This is a *feast*, which, as it wants none of the excellencies of any feast, so it has many, nowhere else to be found.

(1.) This is a *spiritual feast*, though held out by similitudes taken from outward and sensible things: so our Lord tells us, when treating, in the like expressions, of the same matter. Away with carnal thoughts then; it is *spiritual food* you are this day to expect, John vi. 63.

(2.) It is a *heavenly feast*, the *bread of GOD* which cometh down from heaven, even he that giveth life to the world, John vi. 2, 33. This is angels food, or rather more.

(3.) It is a *feast incomparable*, for the excellency, variety, suitableness, plenty of the provisions, and its long continuance: but these more anone

(4.) It is a *free feast*: All is here *without money, and without price*, Isa. lv. Here I might add many other general excellencies of it. Of this you may take plenty without excess: it is *safe food*, it is *saving*; the table is full of *salvation*.

(5) I add, as to this *day's feast*, to which you are now invited in this gospel ordinance of the Supper of our Lord, a solemn gospel-institution, stamped with his appointment and warrant, nay, command. As to this, I say, we only crave leave to add this one general observation, Every feast is a solemnity; but this *day's feast* is appointed with a respect to three of the most solemn occasions, all concurring, that ever were.

(1) Newly reconciled friends are to feast together, in sign of *reconciliation*, and give mutual assurances of firm friendship. Compare 1 Cor. x. 16. with 2 Cor. v. we are to have communion in the *blood of reconciliation*. This is a *feast of reconciliation*, commemorating the happy composition of the most fatal quarrel ever out.

(2.) This is a *marriage feast*: here the espousals of the King's son to the bride he has, in astonishing condescendence, chosen, and solemnized.

(3.) This is the *feast*, which we call by a special name, *A Service*. When heirs are seized of great estates, there are wont to be great entertainments, which we call a *Service*, because then they are several heirs to the estate: well, on this occasion the *bride*, the *Lamb's wife*, is to be seized and infected,

and presented with a sealed right to her Lord's glorious inheritance.

How great then must the entertainment, the *feast* be, that is prepared by the *Lord of Hosts*, to great a *person*, for solemnizing at once, *three so great occasions!* But to proceed.

VII If you further ask What are the materials provided for this *solemn feast*? The text answers, *Fat things, fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees, wines on the lees well refined.* Now this tells you,

1. That there is here provision for a *complete feast*, whatever is necessary for food. There is meat, and there is drink; *fat things and wines.*

2 Every thing that is provided is good, nay the best in its kind; *Fat things full of marrow, wines well refined.*

3. There is plenty of them. *fat things and wines*, in the plural number: there is in our Lord's house, *bread enough, and spare.*

4. There is here variety, *fat things* of different sorts, and variety of *wines.* To give you but a taste of the riches of the provision made for you in the gospel, know, that there is, here indeed, what the *Rabbins* among the *Jews* fancitully report of the *manna*, what will answer every one's taste and need.

(1.) There is preparation for quickening appetite: Of the sort are the dispensations mentioned, Hos. v. 15. Cant. chapters iv, v.

(2) There is milk for babes, even the *sincere milk of the word* 1 Peter ii, 2. Hebr. v. 15.

(3) There is water, even the *water of life*, to cool and allay thirst John iv.

(4) There is strong drink for him that is *ready to perish*, and wine for those that are of a *heavy heart*; of which they may drink, and remember *their sorrows no more*, Prov. xxxi 6.

(5) There is bread, the staff of life, nay the bread of life, that not only strengthens, but gives life.

(6) There is strong meat for them, who, by reason of sin have their senses exercised, Heb. v. 14.

(7) There are here cordials, delicacies for reviving of fainting weak ones, cordials, *spiced wines* Cant. viii.

(8) T

(8) There are fruits, apples, pomegranates: there is nothing wanting that is profitable or pleasant.

5. What is here provided, is of wonderful virtue. Here is (1) that *wine* that makes glad the hearts of those whom all the world could not cheer. (2) Here is that meat that not only strengthens, but gives life. (3) This provision restores, revives and renews youth; see *Psal. ciii.* (4) This feast works wonders, opens the eyes of the blind, makes the deaf to hear, and the lame man, to leap as an hart. Again further, it makes them who share of it, live for ever. In one word to say all, (5) This feast *satisfies* whereas ye have spent all your labour for that which does not satisfy.

6 In a word, here in this feast every thing for matter and manner are the best, in the best order and season, as becomes the state of the King. He that gives the very beasts every one their portion in due season, *Psal. cvii. 27.* will not do less for his people in so solemn occasions: every thing here must suit the state of the King, and the solemnity of the occasions.

VIII. If after all this any of you say, What means all this? All that we have heard seems parables: We would know in plain terms, what we are to get or expect. To satisfy this, I shall descend in plain terms upon a few particular dishes of this feast, and in the choice I shall have a special eye to this ordinance which you are now to celebrate.

1. Then, O believing communicants, you may feed your eyes with a lively view of the *most glorious, convincing; nay, astonishing evidence* of the inconceivable tenderness of everlasting love, toward such *inconsiderable worms as you* justly reckon yourselves. God told his people of old, that who touched them, touched the apple of his eye *Zech ii 8.* But how hard was it for poor sinners, deeply impressed with a sense of God's holiness, and their own sinfulness, to understand how this can be, or believe it. Well here you have an *evidence that forces a conviction*, wherein is love, not that we loved God, but that *he loved us*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, *1 John iv. 10.* In this was manifested the love of God, as the preceeding verse speaks. There is an *evidence* that puts the matter beyond dispute, an evidence beyond what could have been, or desired, or expected, some hints were given of this of old. But here it is in a live-representation appointed of God to convey in a clear impression

sion of the glory of the pledge of this love, and of the love appearing in it. Poor believer, how does this relish? What, no taste in the love of God? no savour in bowels of inexpressible tender love, and that *manifested in a light, clear beyond the brightness of the sun at noon day!*

2 Here you are to be entertained with a *seal, an evidence of remission of sin*. Would you not oft have thought yourself happy, if you could but have seen that there was forgiveness with God, and twice so, if you could have any, the least hint that yours were forgiven. *Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered*, Psal. xxxii. 1. Well, do you have an *evidence of it*. Here you have a draught of blood of atonement, of that sin-offering God has chosen, and cannot but accept, nay, has accepted. *This cup is the blood shed for many for the remission of sins, drink ye all of it*. How does this taste? is it not like new wine going down sweetly enough to make the lips of them that are asleep to speak? Song vii.

3 Here you have a *pledge, a foretaste of your reconciliation with God, as well as a lively representation of the means whereby this peace was brought about*. Here the God with whom you were at variance, to whom you were enemies in your minds, now at a table, invites you to his house; and instead of dropping a crumb to such dogs, invites you to sit down, allows you to partake communion with himself, yea, and to see not merely his back parts, but his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; in respect of which Moses's discovery and sight of the glory of God, almost be said to have no glory. And mean while he lays his hand on you in a way of wrath, he deals not with you as an enemy, but *pleads not with you by his strong power!* Exod. xxiv. 11. Job x.

6. No, but he will put strength in you. You might have expected to meet him as a bear robbed of her whelps: but he meets you as a man does his friend, his intimate. He is somewhat more noble and entertaining than the fatted calf, and all the music earth can elsewhere afford. Is not this, my friend, a sweet entertainment?

4 Survey Christ's goods, read over his testament, enquire into all the unsearchable riches of Christ, taste all the fruits of the Spirit. If there is any relish in these things, all these are before you, exhibited to you in a *sealed right*. *This cup of the New Testament, sealed, confirmed, ratified in his blood*. And

Can you bid take it? Have you no senses, or have you so lost your senses, that you can relish nothing here?

5. Poor souls, it may be some of you think, and sometimes *The things we need to complete our happiness, the expence of grace that will be necessary to carry such weak and empty creatures through all the duties, temptations and trials of our way, is so great; the crown, the weight of glory, and all that honour that is designed the heirs of glory, so far exceeds our mean condition, that it looks like presumption, once to think of it, or hope for it: Ah! how we tremble and fear that we shall be refused, if we seek it; checked as presumptuous, if we offer to lay claim to it. I know some have been so exercised; and it is a wonder there are not more so. Well, how will it please you, if God shall this day give you a sign in hand, that will secure you, nay, more in hand than all that is behind? Oh had we this. we would need no more, we always have, since God opened our eyes, that there was enough in the covenant, to make us happy as heart could wish, but it still stuck here! Will he give this and that and the other thing to us? Well, my friends, God has not spared his only Son for you, but delivered him to the death, and has offered him to you. Here he is again to give him to you, and seal the gift. Now tell me, after God has done thus far, can he stop at any thing that remains? How shall we rest with him freely give us all things? Are grace, or glory, or peace, what you need or can name, in more esteem with God than his Son? Will he bestow him and hold these back? Will he give him thus to and for you, while yet enemies, and when ye are reconciled friends, heirs, children: will he stick at necessaries, and raiment, protection, or a share in his estate? Who dare entertain such a thought? How does this dish relish! this is like the white of an egg! this is not unsavoury meat that cannot be eaten without salt.*

To add no more here, you have the Lamb of God, that on the faith of which the Church of God lived for 4000 years. This is the accomplishment of the great mother promise that was long delayed, and run most hazards as to its accomplishment, the performance of which was that whereon all the church's happiness leaned, its blessedness depended; and of this you have the covenant set before you, which is enough to liberate the church from any suspicion for ever, and oblige to full credit to all the promises, though at the greatest distance,

distance, whatever seeming improbabilities or real difficulties in the way of their accomplishment.

Many other things of the like nature might be added, but this is sufficient for a taste. Now I hope we have spoke plainly and used no parable. As to the

Improvement.

I Think there will be no great need of insisting here. Time is very precious; much of it is spent.

I shall only ask, in the Lord's name, this great assembly on question, Are ye for us, or for our adversaries? Are ye on the Lord's side, or against him? I know, by nature ye are all enemies: but are ye reconciled to him, to his laws, his providence and institutions? Are ye engaged against sin, fighting against sin, all sin, secret sins, beloved sins? Maintain ye a close and constant war against these? Or do ye allow any of them to lie in peace with you? Can ye lay aside your weapons while they are alive? If so then ye are among the enemies the *Moabites*; the feast is not designed for you: But if you fight under the banner of *Jehovah-Sabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts, against all these sins the war against the soul, and can admit neither peace nor truce with any of them; then I say,

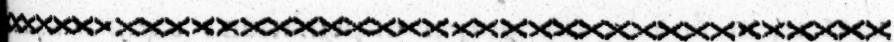
1. Whatever you are, of whatever condition, station, relation whatever you have heretofore been, *for you* is this feast this provided. What the Lord in the text promised, is *this prepared* in this gospel-solemnity; the oxen and fatlings killed, the wines are mingled, the table is covered, and we sent to call you to the feast.

2. We cannot but congratulate your happiness: Hail, blessed of the Lord! Hail, people greatly favoured! whom the Lord of Hosts thinks fit to honour, so as to prepare you for a noble feast, and it for you, and to set you at his table.

3. For the Lord's sake, think not light of this honour which is this day done you: it is not a small matter. Is it a small matter to sit at the table of the Lord?

4. Open your mouths wide. If the edge of your appetite is not sharp, if your desires are not quick, cry to him who can give you: *The preparation of the heart is from the Lord.*

5. For the Lord's sake mind where you are, when you approach his table, and beware of any unbecoming carriage.
 6. Before ye step foreward, look well that ye be indeed among those who have a right to be there. A mistake in this may be of dangerous consequence. As for you of this congregation, I have offered you marks whereby you may try it; and for strangers, I doubt not but by their respective ministers they are plentifully supplied. If any *Moabites* shall crowd in, as I do not at my fears that many may, here they may expect to be trodden down.
 7. As for such of you whom the Lord our God hath called, there remains no more at present, but to invite you, and welcome you in the Lord's name. *Come, eat, O friends, drink, yea, eat abundantly, O beloved: Come, eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness* He that has made this provision, shall satisfy you, poor souls, with bread, and abundantly with your provision.



S E R M O N II.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED: Or,

Wisdom and Power of GOD in him, rendering the Gospel-call Effectual

I COR. i. 23.

we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness.

24. *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ (viz. crucified) the Power of GOD, and the Wisdom of GOD.*

We are met this day to prepare for the celebration of the memorial of Christ's crucifixion or death: Now I know that can be more suitable to this end, than to endeavour to bring you into right thoughts of the nature, excellency and importance

portance of this death, which you are solemnly to commend: and there is the more need of this, that many now be to be weary of this part of the gospel, and can scarce know, according to their models of religion, what room to assign. The subject is large, our time precious; we shall but glaze, endeavouring rather to insist on what must not be omitted, than what may be said.

The apostle in this digression, which begins *verse 17.* and continued to the beginning of chapter iii, tells us what is the most effectual way of saving sinners: and in this discourse,

1. He tells the vanity of all mens contrivances for this *verse 19, 20, 21.*

2. He tells us what means God had contrived, and that is the gospel, *verse 18, 21.*

3. He tells us what is the principal means of *salvation* set forth in the gospel, and that is *Christ crucified*, *verse 17, 23, 24.*

4. He shews how this mean is to be used and applied, that is, in and by the gospel dispensation: *Christ crucified* to be held forth in the way of God's appointment, *verse 17, 24.*

5. He represents what entertainment it met with, when it was proposed, *verse 25.* *Jews and Greeks* rejected this way of salvation.

6. In the words of the text, *verse 24.* he asserts the efficacy of this mean, this way of salvation, notwithstanding the contempt cast on it.

In this verse shortly we may notice those four things.

I. We have the subject of the apostle's discourse; it is *Christ crucified*; this is plain from the preceeding and the whole context. *Christ crucified*, in the apostle's argument, was the great subject of the gospel, which is the *gospel of the cross*, *verse 18.* It was *that* he was principally concerned to hold forth to his hearers, and have them acquainted with *chap. ii. verse 2.* and in comparison of this, he could say, *Phil. iii. 10.* It seems our apostle was of a different mind from many now-a-days, both at home and abroad, who think that men may be very good Christians, and effectually saved, tho' they know little, or perhaps nothing of the death: but this is not the only instance wherein our apostle happened to be of a different mind from Rabbi's of old

te, for which he has met with sharp enough censures, that, I
ar, will one day bring the censures under correction.

II. We have the excellency of this, in order to the salvation
sinners, which is the end now in view, as the whole context
ears beyond exception: It is the power of God, the powerful
ean by which God puts forth his *power*, to the salvation of
hem that believe; it is the *wisdom of God*, Rom. i. 16. it is
ne *wise contrivance of God*, Acts iv. 27, 28. whereby God de-
igned, and really does manifest his wisdom and power in the
lvation of the church.

III. We have the persons to whom it is so; it is them that
re *effectually called*, whether *Jews* or *Greeks*: To *them* it was;
they found it powerful; they approved it as the wisdom of
od, and the power of God.

IV. We have the certainty and firmness of this doctrine,
otwithstanding of the contrary opinion of the *Jews* and *Greeks*:
his is insinuated in the adversative, *But*, in the beginning of the
erle, denoting the opposition of this to their judgment, men-
oned verse 23.

Now from the words we offer this doctrine.

*Christ crucified, held out in the gospel-dispensation, is the powerful
an whereby God, in his wisdom, effectually saves all them that
e called.*

The doctrine needs no texts to prove it; it is plain in the
ords; the context is full of it; the whole scripture are so, as
e shall see afterwards. In speaking to it we shall

- I. Offer some plain remarks about *Christ crucified*.
- II. Offer some explication of their character, for whom he
as so.
- III. Clear and illustrate the doctrine by some instances of the
ower of the death, the crucifixion of Christ.
- IV. We shall make some improvement suitable to the occasion.
 1. We shall offer some remarks about *Christ crucified*: And
Our Lord was indeed the *Christ of God*, the Messiah, the A-
ointed; him had God solemnly set apart, and fully furnished
be the *Saviour of sinners*, Acts iv. 27. He is the *Holy Child*
us whom thou hast anointed, says the joyful congregation in
eir song of praise. Compare *Matt. i. 21.* with *Luke i. 74.*
 2. The *Christ of God*, whom he ordained to *save the world*,
s in the world, and by the word *crucified*, put to death.

Jews and Gentiles, rulers and people, church and state, elect and reprobate, a full representation of the world concurred to crucify the Saviour of the world. This is a common, but very strange truth. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at the monstrous ingratitude of the world below! What a strange thing also is it, that he who was ordained, anointed to save the world should die! the Prince of Life lose his life! the Saviour be destroyed, as it were! But this is not all: for,

3. The *Christ* of God was sent into the world by God, to be *Christ crucified*, Rom viii. 32. God spared him not, he delivered him up: he gave his enemies power against him, as our Lord insinuates to *Pilate*, John, xix. 11. He bid his sword awake against him, Zech. xiii. 7. he put him to grief, and bruised him, Isaiah liii. 10. Strange! the *Christ* of God, by the determinate council of God, crucified! Acts iv. 28. What must the matter be? which leads me to remark,

4. The *Christ* of God was not crucified for any sin of his own: He was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, Heb. vii. 26, 27. He needed no atonement for his own sins. He was cut off, *not for himself*, Dan. ix. 26.: His enemies could find no fault with him: heaven proclaims him innocent. Accursed therefore are the notions that now spread amongst men. That *Christ's* will was sinful; that there were rebellions in his lower faculties, &c. and the apologies for this are no better.

5. *Christ* was crucified in the stead of sinners, for our sin, for he was cut off from the land of the living: *For the transgression of my people was he stricken*, Isaiah liii. 8.; that is, not merely for our good, as Socinians speak: nor was it only or principally to leave us an example of suffering; but it was in our stead in our place. This Socinians, and they who of old and of late fall in with them, oppose: and I wish that some amongst ourselves, with their new and useless disputes about the sense wherein *Christ* bore our persons, had not contributed too much to darkening this glorious truth, whereon all the power of *Christ's* death toward our salvation hangs. I shall tell you what scripture says in this matter plainly.

(1) *Christ* was made, or admitted by God, to be our surety, Heb. vii. 22. whereas we only were at first bound by the law. He was now allowed to come in our bond, and made under the law, Gal. iv. 5. whereby he became liable to

er all that the law required of us: and to this he willingly
 agreed. Tho' he was in the form of God, he made *himself of*
reputation, took the form of a servant, and *became obedient to*
death, even the death of the cross, Philip ii. 6, 7, 8. Psal. xl. 6,
 8.

(2) Our sins were charged on him; *God laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Isaiah liii. 6 and he *bare them*, even our sins
 verse 11.

(3) He was punished for those sins, he was cut off from the
 end of the living, Isaiah liii. 8. not for himself, Dan. ix. 26.
for the transgression of my people was he smitten, Isa. liii. 8.

(4) The punishment he suffered for these sins, was the pu-
 nishment threatened by the law. *He was made a curse for us*,
to deliver us from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13.

(5) His design in bearing this punishment was, that we
 might be delivered from the curse, as we see in the words last
 cited.

(6) His death is reckoned ours, that is, as undergone and
 suffered for us, and whereof the benefit should accrue to us, *If*
he died for all, then are all dead, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. We are
 justified with him, buried with him.

(7) *His death and punishment*, we are to plead as *payment or*
satisfaction, when we are accused, charged and called to account;
 we are to plead his *resurrection* as our *discharge*, as to all
 that can be required of us, in order to our justification, see *Rom.*
 34, 35.

Now this much for the first general head proposed.

Let us see who they are for whom Christ was crucified,
 to whom he is the power of God. This is a dispute, I
 give you some plain scripture characters of the persons.

They are such as were given to him of the Father. His
 Father is to *give life to as many as are given him*, John xvii. 2.
shall all, in time, come to him, and none of them be lost, John
 7. 39.

They are in the text, those who are *called*, not merely ex-
 ternally, as those mentioned in the verse before, but internally
 effectually, in opposition to them, and who are the same with
 those chosen, *verse 26, 27* compared with the text.

They are such to whom Christ is in time given, and with
 him

him all things, *Rom. viii 32*. Here is the order, Christ, (1) *delivered for us*. (2) *Given to us*. (3) *All things with him*.

4. They are such as *believe on him, receive him*, to them it the gospel is the *power of God*, *Rom i. 16*.

Finally, I might tell you, they are God's people, *Isai. liii*. Christ's sheep, *John x. 11*. The church of God, &c. but I pass these.

III. I shall now show in some instances, that *Christ crucified* or the *death of Christ* is the *power and the wisdom of God*, to the *salvation*.

I. *Christ's death*, held forth in the gospel, is the *power* of God, the powerful mean whereby sinners are called or converted. What is the great thing that prevails on sinners to turn to God? Why, it is the offer of a slain Saviour, *Acts ii*. Three thousand are converted! Well, what was it that prevailed upon them? look the chapter; it is a sermon about Christ crucified. Who converted most to God? I believe never any convert so many as our apostle. Well, what means used? It was the preaching of the cross, as he tells us in this text,

II. *Christ crucified* is the power of God to justification. Our apostle dwells upon in the first five chapters of the epistle to the *Romans*, and frequently elsewhere. The case is of a Guilty man is called to account, accused for his sins before God. What plea shall he make, where shall there answer be that will *effectually* clear them? if judgment is given against him, he is undone.

The wisdom of men, Heathens and Christians have laboured to find pleas, and to this day new defences are still sought. Some are for pleading not guilty, denying. (2) Others for excusing, extenuating faults, like *Adam*. (3) Some for making amends by vows to do better in time coming. (4) Some promise to do more than is required. (5) Some pretend to atone their sins with their tears. (6) Some are for penance. (7) Some run to sacrifices of beasts. (8) Others to barbarous human sacrifices. (9) Others to the sacrificing their own children. (10) And some fearing all this not enough, would content to go to impossibilities, *Micah vi. 4*. (11) Some are much in acts of charity. (12) Others are for monastic retirement.

retirement and mortification, as they falsely call it, or to use the modish word, *doing penance*. (13) Some for trusting to their own faith. (14) Others to their sincere obedience, such as they can give. And in effect here they all land. We owe pounds, and we will pay pennies. You see there are two advantages. (1) God shall not have it to say, that he freely *forgave them all*. (2) They may say they have *paid some, tho' not what they ought, yet what they could*, and it were cruel to ask more. Finally, Some hearing all this not enough, run to a purgatory, or in the new language, a state of purification. Look how hard man's wisdom is put to it, and yet not one of all, nor all these together, have power to justify and bring us off.

The wisdom of God by the gospel *reveals the righteousness of God*, Rom. i. 17. If a sinner that believes is charged, threatened with condemnation for sin, it bids him plead, *Christ has died for sin*, that is, has satisfied, paid; that *he is risen*, that is, has obtained a discharge, and is in heaven to make it good, Rom. viii. 4. This will powerfully bring us off; no other plea will; they are weak and foolish.

III. *Christ's death* is the power of God to sanctification. This must be cleared in an instance or two, especially as to mortification.

(1) *Christ's death* is a *satisfaction* for sin, for the guilt of all their sins, that are partakers of it, and hereby sin loses its claim to their service. It is the power of God to *disable* the foundation of sin's dominion. Sin has no right that prejudices God's, but man and Satan both have a sort of lawful dominion over us by our own consent, according to the rule, Rom. vi. 16. but as soon as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings and death, Phil. iii. 10. and so dead with him, Rom. vi. 4, 5. 2 Cor. v. 14. who died for us, if sin pretend to reign and say, We have yielded *ourselves servants to obey it*, we may now answer, *We are dead*, 2 Cor. v. 14. and so are no longer bound; for the law binds a man no longer than he lives, Rom. vii. 1. Again, our consent is declared null, our Surety has suffered for it among the rest of our sins, and so it is dead, binds no more. Finally, Sin, thou art condemned as a traitor, when we were, or our Surety was condemned for our submitting to thee, judgment was thereby given against thee; our old man is crucified with Christ, Rom. vi. 6 no service

service is due to a dead master, one legally dead. Thus we see the meaning of *Rom. vi. 7. He that is dead is freed*, or as the Greek has it, *justified from sin*. He is powerfully secured against any right that sin claimed to his service.

(2) *Christ's death*, as the price of our redemption from the power of sin, has powerfully purchased, that is, effectually, and really merited the communication of the holy Spirit, who actually breaks the power of sin, by planting, actuating, supporting, strengthening, reviving the opposite principle of grace, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, whereby we are freed from the law of sin, and sin is mortified, *Rom. viii. 2, 13*. Now, Christ's death, as a price, purchased this, *Gal. iii. 13, 14* and *through him it is shed on us abundantly, Tit. iii. 6*. *Christ crucified is the power of God in a meritorious and real sense to our salvation from the power of sin.*

(3) Christ's death, as an atonement, secures the acceptance of our services, and so removes discouragements, and affords the most effectual arguments to enforce holiness. Our labour is not in vain in the Lord, *1 Cor. xv. 58*, but acceptable through him, *1 Pet. ii. 5* see *2 Cor. v. 14, 15*. Thus it is morally the power of God to sanctification.

(4) Christ's death, as held forth in the gospel, is the means made use of to make us holy, and so it *instrumentally, as we were*, is the power of God to sanctification, *2 Cor. iii. 18*. It is a principal part of that glory that changes us when we see it. We might alledge many other instances of its influence in sanctification, as the pattern of the destruction of the old man, *Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6* and the like. No wonder souls that desire to be holy join with the apostle's desire, *Philip. iii. 10*.

IV. Christ crucified, or his death, is the power of God to our consolation, being the great pledge of God's love to us. God commended his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, *Rom. v. 8*, and this will bear much, see the context, *verse 6—12*. This is the spring of consolation.

V. Christ's death is the power of God, to assure us of the other blessings of the covenant. It is the pledge that makes us sure that all the rest shall be given in their season, direction, strength, support, provision, protection, light, life, love, *Rom. viii. 32*.

VI. Christ crucified is the power of God to secure our acceptance, and obtain us safe access to the Holiest, *Heb. x. 19.* We are safe, having the Lamb slain betwixt us and hazard. He has borne the iniquity of our holy things, and we have access, i. e. safe access into the Holiest by his blood.

VII. Christ's death is the power of God, to the overthrow of Satan: by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, *Heb. ii. 14.* This may be understood by what has said about sanctification; Christ pays the debt, and so, (1) Satan the jailor loses right to detain us in prison. (2) We have right to crave power to free us from the wrongous detainer.

VIII. Christ's death powerfully delivers us from the sting of death, and that is, the guilt of sin. This has been cleared before, when we spoke of justification, *Heb. ii. 15.*

IX. Christ's death is the meritorious price of our inheritance; he died that we might receive the promise of eternal inheritance, *Heb. ix. 15.*

X. Christ's death confirms the Testament, and so secures all grace and glory to us, *Heb. ix. 16, 17.*

We might speak further of its power in crucifying the world, and the like; but we pass these, and come to the application. Now, from what has been said, we may,

I. For Information, learn,

The manifold wisdom of God, that by a mean, so unlikely foolish in men's apprehensions, brings about so many glorious effects; this is what the angels look into, and the redeemed round the throne fix their eyes on, the *Lamb that was slain.* In we may learn,

That the doctrine of Christ crucified and its power, is a great, yea the principal part, the glory of the mystery of the gospel, of the Christian religion. All models of religion shorten its power, cramp it into narrow bounds, pre-empt zeal for what they will, misrepresent the Christian religion, mislead it wholly; for all the power of our religion arises from the powerful death of Christ has in it: and therefore the *Jesuits* in the *Indias* who conceal it, the *Socinians*. *Quakers* modern *Mysticks* who leave little room for the power of the death of Christ, if not as an example, or a notable act of obedience, in a difficult duty, teach not the gospel.

3. The more directly and evidently any gospel ordinance presents or sets forth Christ as crucified, or Christ in his death the more glorious, useful, and valuable it is. How great then is the glory of this ordinance ye are now preparing for? How is he evidently set forth as crucified, in express words of revelation and signs of his own appointment?

4. We may learn, that it is a great privilege to have the means whereby Christ is thus set forth evidently in his death for these are the channels whereby all his *saving power* is conveyed to them that are called. There is no experience of the power, but by *faith, it is by faith we are saved*, Eph. ii. 8. And where there is no divine command for a warrant, no institution to lay stress on, no promise to grip to, but a, *Who hath required this?* staring us in the face, there is no place for faith. In this cursed doctrine many are now drinking in, That every means may fancy useful for this or that end, *ex. gr.* mortifying &c. may be used, this will bring in crucifixes, pennances, I know not what, yea all the *Pagan* rites, this is a shoe for foot: but, blessed be God, we have the means of God's institution, that are the channels of this power, the ministrations of the Spirit applying it, and, *of these we are not ashamed*, Rom. i. 16.

5. We may learn, that our religion is an experimental religion; it is a discovery of a saving remedy to perishing sinners, a remedy that is all power, and works many effects that may be felt. Well then, if ye have no experience of the power of the death of Christ to those ends mentioned, ye are no Christians. Notions of truth make no man such, experience of the power of God, and sight, conviction of the wisdom of God herein, that does. *The kingdom of God is not in word but in power.*

II. For Trial.

Is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to those that are called? then try whether ye are called.

1. Your duty at this time, is not to look at bread and butter but to discern and remember Christ's death, and that as the power of God, and wisdom of God. This is plainly the apostle's discourse that you hear read at these occasions. Now, ye can discern this, but those who are called, to others' foolishness.

2. This is what communicants are bid try, why they are bid examine themselves, whether they are in case to discern the Lord's body? now only these that are called, are so. But how shall we know this? I answer,

1. Were ye ever made so sensible of, so convinced of your worst condition, your sin, your guilt, that ye could get no peace, no rest, no relief in your fig-leaf aprons; your excuses, promises of amendment, and other your best duties, nor nothing else, till ye got from the Lord a powerful discovery of Christ crucified? Nothing relieved the poor convinced sinners, *Acts* ii. 37. till this came, verse 38.

2. Have ye ever got such a discovery of the power and wisdom of God in the death of Christ, Christ crucified, as makes you not only not condemn it with the world, but makes you delight in it, dwell on it in your thoughts; place all your comfort and hope, in life and death, in duty and trials on it, counting all but loss, so you may get an interest in this, and find the power of it? *Phil* iii. 8, 9, 10.

III. For Exhortation.

Now to you, who upon trial, dare say you are called, we have word of exhortation. Is Christ crucified the power of God, and the wisdom of God? Then,

1. Think upon the death of Christ, remember it; Can ye be Christians, and not think on it? Nay, I had almost said, can ye be Christians and think upon any other thing? It is a wonder that the thoughts of Christians can fix upon any other thing almost, that they are not full of this that is the channel of their salvation, and of all saving mercies. Will ye not think on that whereon all depends, for which all is given you that ye want or expect? I know there are some that say, ministers preach too much of the death of Christ; we would have them press morality, we would have them preach duties, holiness, mortification to the world, the love of God. O poor ignorant souls! is there any other way so effectual to bring about these ends, as this? If Christ crucified is not preached, if he is not received, they will never be compassed. If we dwelt more here, we would be more holy, humble, mortified, love more. Other things will never do it; it is ignorance of the gospel that makes people prefer other things, and postpone this.

2. Celebrate the memorial of the death of Christ; has he bid you remember it, prescribed a way to do it in, and will you not do it, and do it in the way of his appointment?

3 Prepare to remember it, prepare for the celebration of it: there is manifold wisdom to be seen, many powers to be felt in it: we have need to be prepared to discern, to improve, to claim them. How shall we prepare? What preparation is meet? answer,

1 Ye that are learned men, scholars, students, learn to know this night, that you are lost sinners as well as others; and that your wisdom, your learning will not save you: The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. I design no reflection upon learning; nay I would, were it needful, commend it to you: but I say this, because the want of this, as the verse preceding our text, made the learned *Greeks* cast at Christ. Learn that you are lost, and that Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God to salvation; this will be a meet preparation. Prepare to discern the manifold wisdom of God here.

2. As to others, nay to you all, learned or unlearned, say, look out, (1) What are your hazards, dangers; here is Christ presented to you Christ crucified, the power of God, the wisdom of God to save you from the guilt of sin, the power of sin, of Satan, of the world, fears. (2) Look out what are your wants; here is a death that is a price for all you need, here is a rich testament, here is a confirmed testament without expences, all is cleared: here ye may have a pledge that the testament is confirmed, that your name is in it. Nay here ye may enter into possession, and obtain what ye need. (3) Prepare room to receive eyes to discern, dwell upon the thoughts of this, turn your eyes from other things. Here many things offer, but they may not encroach upon you, or others, who may entertain them better.

4. One word more, and I have done with you. Ye that are called, shew forth his death, openly profess it; be not ashamed of it, avouch it before the world, that ye look on the death of Christ as the glory of your religion, and the power of God to salvation, now when it is contemned, when it is stumbled at. I must leave other inferences to be drawn by yourselves, I offer this concluding exhortation.

Is Christ the power of God to salvation? O labour for

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experimental acquaintance with this power; power may be felt, let it be seen by your life that Christ is power, and that you have an interest in it; seek an experience of it this night for quickening graces, love, faith, repentance, and killing sin, and this will prepare you.

S E R M O N III.

DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS;

With their Ends and Advantages issuing in Christian Obedience and Establishment.

M A T T H. xvii. 5.

While he yet spake, beho'd a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

YOU may perhaps think, the choice of this subject upon the back of a communion somewhat strange; but if the matter is well considered, I know none more suitable, and this, I hope, shall be made appear in our progress. I shall, for clearing my way to the purpose we design to insist on, and evincing the suitability of it to this occasion, offer the few following remarks upon the context.

First, The Lord Jesus Christ did *here* upon the mount gloriously manifest himself to three of his disciples; and here, in like manner, in this ordinance, *he hath been evidently set forth as crucified before you*; and some, we hope, on this occasion, have seen glory.

Secondly, The disciples, surprised and affrighted with the glory of the manifestation, knew not what to make of it, wist not what to say; but *Peter* begins to talk of *making tabernacles, and dwelling on the mount*: So some perhaps, may be at a loss what improvement to make of this manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ in this Sacrament.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, While they are in this confusion, this seasonable instruction, as to the intendment and design of the vision, and manifestation in the words of our reading, is sent from heaven hereby they are instructed what God designed, what they were called unto for their own advantage, and what return they should make unto the Lord for his goodness in the manifestation.

This then is the design of the words, to direct how to improve a notable divine manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the words then, more particularly we may notice,

1st, The seasonableness of this instruction, *while he yet spake* at that very instant when *Peter* was bewraying his ignorance and mistake, this voice is sent to set him right again; divine instructions are well timed, *Grace comes in time of need*, Heb. 11. 16. when we are *turning to the right hand or left*, then it is the voice behind us saith, *This is the way, walk ye in it*. Isa. xxx. 2.

2^{dly}, In the words, we may take notice of the manner of the Lord's appearance, when he comes to instruct, *it is in a bright cloud overshadowing them*; hereby pointing out to us, (1) That the Lord's appearances are suited to our necessities; when we are in the dark, God manifests himself in light, and as the light (2) That the Lord appears, not only in a way suited to our need, but sweetly proportioned to our strength; he appears in *brightness*, but it is in a *bright cloud*; we are not able to behold the brightest light, the direct beams of the glorious fountain of light, and can only look upon a reflected light: Well, there is a cloud interposed to reflect what light we need, and keep from the direct rays of that glory which we cannot bear. *Exod. xxxiii. 19, 20, &c.* Again, (3) The manner of the Lord's appearance here, is in a cloud, to point out the swiftness of it, when his peoples need requires sudden help; clouds are swift, hence we read of the Lord's *coming in clouds*, and *his making way upon the wings of the wind*, Psal. xviii. 10. The refreshment that is in divine manifestations, may be hereby intended *the bright cloud overshadowed them*: Shadows refreshing in scorching heats, and divine manifestations a shelter against temptations.

3^{dly}, We have the means of instruction, which the Lord makes use of; it is a voice out of the cloud, a distinct, P

sweet and instructive sound ; a mean that is first familiar to us, and so suited to our advantage, and which therefore, 2dly, carries not in it that terror, which might indispose and put us out of case, for taking up what God designs to make us understand. And, 3dly, There appears much of condescension to their weaknesses, in their present confusion they were not capable to take up God's mind, from the dark hints of a symbolical manifestation : wherefore God condescends to instruct them by plain words, in the meaning and design of the vision, and their duty.

4thly, We have here a double note of attention, the one prefixed to the season and manner of God's appearance, the other to the instruction itself : hereby pointing out, 1. The natural unpreparedness, stupidity, and inadvertency of the mind of man. 2. The importance of the things discovered. 3. The necessity of attention, in order to reach the things designed by them. 4. The necessity of observing every circumstance of divine manifestations, the matter, the manner, and the season.

5thly, We have here in the words the instruction itself, and this respects two, or perhaps three things. 1. The confirmation of their faith, as to the great truths concerning the Son of God, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* ; as if the voice had said, The design of this view of his glory which we have got, is not to be a rest, or matter merely of comfort and satisfaction to you at present, on which ye may sit down, and which you are to expect the continuance of ; but it is to satisfy you fully that this Christ, whom the world contemns, rejects, opposeth and persecuteth, and whom ere long you will see yet more deeply humbled ; notwithstanding all which, yet this is my beloved Son, in whom I delight, and for whose sake alone I accept of, and am well pleased with elect sinners. 2. We have direction as to practice, *Hear ye him*, i. e. however mean his appearance is at present, yet ye have reason to own him as your Lord, and to subject yourselves unto him : and to satisfy you of this, you have got this foretaste of the glory he will appear after his humiliation is over. 3. The voice instructs us in the powerful influence of a confirmed faith upon practice, if we believe that he is the Son of God, hearing and obedience will follow upon it.

The words afford many useful truths, but I shall single out one, *That the great scope of special and solemn manifestations* of

of the Lord's glory to his disciples, is to confirm them in the faith of the great foundation truths of religion, and thereby lead them to the obedience of faith.

That you may understand this truth the better, it is to be observed, that by manifestations, we intend those discoveries which the Lord is pleased to make of himself, his attributes, his will, and works unto his people. 2. That these discoveries are of two sorts, *special* and *common*: this distinction our Lord teacheth us himself, in that discourse of his with Judas, not Iscariot, John xiv. 21, 22, 23. where we hear of manifestations which he gives to the world in the works of creation and providence, by the law written on the heart, and outward ordinances; and we hear of special manifestations which he gives not to the world. 3. These special saving manifestations to his own people, are again of two sorts, more ordinary, which they have for their common allowance, in the course of their walk with God, and more solemn or extraordinary, which the Lord affords them on some special occasions; it is of this last sort, that in the doctrine is principally intended, though I shall not exclude even the more ordinary manifestations that occur to the Lord's people in the course of their walk. As for the common manifestations which he gives to the world, they come not within the compass of our consideration at present: As for scriptures confirming this purpose, they will occur afterwards; at present, it is sufficient that the truth hath a plain foundation in the text. In prosecuting of it further, we shall in order discuss these five things.

1. We shall enquire in what way, and by what means it is that God gives those solemn and special manifestations of himself.

2. What is intended by this confirmation in the faith of the truths of religion, that is the design of those manifestations.

3. What is that obedience of faith that follows on this confirmation, and is the other part of the design of special manifestations.

4. We shall enquire how these manifestations do confirm the faith, and excite to obedience.

5. I shall confirm the truth of the doctrine.

And lastly, Wynd up all in some practical improvement.

The first general head, By what ways and means doth the Lord give to his people these special and solemn manifestations? To answer to which, I say,

1. He does it in ways and by means extraordinary and miraculous at some times, means that are quite out of the common road. There are miracles in grace, as well as in nature, there are in God's dispensations of grace ordinary means, which for the most part he useth, in governing and carrying on his work in the church; and there are extraordinary ways to which sometimes he hath recourse. Of this last sort are visional representations, dreams, voices, inspirations, and the like. Such manifestations *Moses* and *Elias*, and many others of the worthies of old had, and such is this in the text; and of this sort of manifestations it is, that *Elibu* elegantly discourseth, Job xxxiii. 15, 16.

2. He gives special and solemn manifestations of his glory by standing works of creation, not merely by presenting them to their view; this all men daily have, and thus they are always presented to the people of God: but he then manifests himself solemnly by them, when he opens remarkably his peoples eyes, gives them an unusual light, shines on his works, and gives them a special discerning of the prints of his glory in them; as the Psalmist had, when he composed the 8th and 19th Psalms. Again,

3. He gives special manifestations of himself, when he is pleased to shine in an extraordinary way upon his ordinary works of providence, thereby enabling them to discern with unusual evidence the beamings of his glory in them; such a manifestation the Psalmist had, when he composed that sweet meditation which we have in the 104th Psalm; so great was the glory of that he is put to pause in the midst of his song, and give vent to the deep sense he had of the glory of the Lord shining in his works, *verse 24. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! Wisdom hast thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches.*

The Lord manifests himself solemnly to his people in and by special providences, either towards themselves or the church in general. Thus he manifested himself to *Abraham*, in stopping the execution of his son *Isaac*; to *Jacob*, in delivering him from *Esau*, to the church in *Egypt* at the *Red-sea*, in the wilderness,

derness, at *Jordan*, and upon many other occasions, *Gene*
xxii. 11, — 15.

5. The Lord manifests himself some-whiles gloriously to
people in secret duties, as to *Hannah*, to *Daniel*, &c.

6. The Lord manifests his glory in a special and solen
way, by glorious works of grace inwardly wrought upon the
Thus he manifests himself to his people, at first conversion
when he forms the new creature, *translates them out of darkness*
into marvellous light, and afterwards discernably breaks
power of strong corruptions, rebukes violent and strong tem
tations, or fills the soul under great trials with overflow
consolations; such the martyrs and sufferers have had, and
them they were made exceeding joyful in their afflictions,
took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.

7. The Lord manifests himself thus by his written wo
when in reading, or in meditation upon it, he hopes their
to behold the wonders of his law in a warming and enliven
light, and instructs them clearly in things concerning him
such the disciples going to *Emmaus* had, when Christ conver
with them, *and opened the scriptures to them*, *Luke xxiv. 32*

8. The Lord most frequently gives these solemn and so
manifestations in public ordinances; *He loves the gates of Zion*
more than all the dwellings of Jacob, *Psal. lxxxvii. 2*. His gl
and power have been *seen in the sanctuary*; *Psal. lxiii. 2*.
the *place where his honour dwells*, and they who out of love
the habitation of his house enquire there, *do behold the beauty*
the Lord; compare *Psal. xxvi. 8*. with *xxvii. and 4*. And h
it is, that in his temple, every one speaks of his glory.

9. The Lord doth frequently give such solemn and so
manifestations in sealing ordinances, and particularly about
time of the administration of the *Lord's Supper*. It was a
this occasion that he gave that glorious discovery of him
that makes up one of the sweetest parts of the book of *John*, as
I mean the 14. and 17. chapters of the gospel of *John*, as
may see by *John xiii. 31*. compared with chapter 18. a
beginning. In this ordinance, if any where, Christ is evid
set forth crucified; here we are to remember him, and
never behind with any; *he meets them that rejoice and*
righteousness, those that remember him in his ways, *Isa. lxiv*

11. We now proceed to the next general head, to en

that is intended by this confirmation in the faith of the fundamental truths of religion which is one great part of the design of these solemn manifestations, and here we shall shew, what is the import of that expression, *This is my beloved Son*, &c. in so far as it points out the design of this manifestation, now I conceive that hereto these four truths belong,

1. Increase of knowledge about the truths of religion, *This is my beloved Son*, is as much as if it had been said, You have got this manifestation of his glory, that you may know more distinctly and satisfyingly, that *this is my beloved Son*, and what glory belongs to him, notwithstanding his majesty is now for a time veiled. Our minds are naturally dark, and even after saving illumination is begun, we know but in part; and, from this darkness, wavering proceeds; what we know but darkly, we easily suspect, and easily slide into mistakes about it. Now the Lord, when he manifests himself, either discovers somewhat more than was formerly known, or sets, what before was known, in a clearer light, and hereby brings his people to a more full understanding of divine truths in their several concerns, whereby the mind is further established or confirmed about them. *Now know I*, saith the Psalmist, *that the Lord saveth his anointed*, Psal. xx. 6. *Now I know*, saith Jethro, *that the Lord is greater than all Gods; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them*, i. e. Though I did know somewhat of this before, yet now I understand it more distinctly, and am further confirmed in it.

2. To this establishment and confirmation in faith, there belongs a fulness of persuasion, a satisfaction, composure or quietness in the soul, in believing the truth, in opposition to uneasiness, anxieties, fears, and doubtings. *This is my beloved Son*, that is, he has thus manifested his glory, that you may not henceforth, from the meanness of his appearance, or any further steps of humiliation, be brought to hesitate, or in the least doubt of his being *my beloved Son*, but may rest fully assured of his being so, in spite of all contrary appearances. *Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed*, is as much as if he had said, I have no suspicion, hesitation or scruple any more about it. Thus *Abraham* was confirmed as to the truth of the promises, or was fully persuaded in his own mind, resting composed in the faith, Rom.

21. Much of the vanity of the mind of man lies in an inclination

clination and readiness to fluctuate about, and suspect divine truths, special manifestations are designed to cure the darkness and hereby to bring the soul to composure and rest in the faith of them, which is not the least part of confirmation,

3. This establishment or confirmation, at which manifestations aim, implies fixedness, adherence and constancy of persuasion, or strength of faith in opposition to shocking difficulties that may come in our way. *This is my beloved Son*, you are not only now to give up with your suspicions, doubtings and fears of mistake; but afterwards, when this glance is gone, and when you shall see him mocked, spit on, and put to death, you are not to stagger at the truth thro' unbelief, but must hold to it. Thus *Abraham* staggered not, but remained fixed in his persuasion, being nothing moved by contrary appearances that seemed to shock his faith, but against hope believed in hope. Rom. vii. 17, — 20.

4. There belongs to this confirmation in faith a confidence laying stress upon the truth, of which we are thus fixedly persuaded; so *Abraham* did, and this is the genuine fruit of *they that know his name put their trust in him*, Psal. ix. And hereof we have a notable example in *Psal. 20*. The Psalmist begin satisfied and confirmed in the truth, ver. 6. *Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed*, proceeds in the subsequent verses: To lay the stress of his preservation from dangers on it, thus in the text, *This is my beloved Son*, &c, is much as if it had been said, You have got this manifestation that you may be encouraged and emboldened to flee and cleave to him, lay stress on him, as to your acceptance with God, use him on all occasions.

III. We now come to show what is that obedience of faith that flows from, and follows upon this confirmation, which is intended here by the words, *Hear ye him*. Manifestations are designed, *First*, To satisfy us as to truth, and then ultimately to lead to an answerable deportment, this, *Hear ye him*: This imports,

1. An acknowledgement of him as the Lord, we must acknowledge Jesus Lord, 1 Cor. xii. 3. that is, acknowledge or own, with, and accept of him as one to whom obedience is due. *John* xx. 26, 27, No sooner did he manifest himself to the *disciples*, and established him in the faith, but presently ver. 28. he cries out, *My Lord and my God*.

2. *Hear ye him*, imports attendance on him to receive his commandments; it is the business of servants and hand-maids to wait their master's will, *Psal. cxxiii. 2.* and like *Isaiah*, to be ready at every call, to say, *Here am I*, *Isa. vi. 8.*
3. *Hear ye him*, That is, Credit him intirely; you are not to question any thing he says, nor dispute any of his commands.
4. *Hear him*, i. e. obey him, yield a practical compliance with whatever he enjoins; the gospel is sent to all nations for the obedience of faith, that crediting him, we may practically comply with his will, *Rom. i. 5.*
5. *Hear ye him*, imports the reasonableness of our obedience; we are indeed to obey whatever he enjoins, but not till once he hath satisfied us, that he is the Lord, one every way worthy of obedience, and made us distinctly understand his will. Thus religion is a reasonable service; *First*, we see him worthy of command, then own him as such: *Next*, we hear him give out his will, and thereon obey.
6. *Hear ye him*, that is, Hear him only; we may call none other master; for one is our master, even Christ.
7. *Hear ye him*, imports a readiness in our obedience; you must obey him at hearing, as the word is, *Psal. xviii. 44.* no power must we hear, but instantly we must comply.
8. *Hear ye him*, that is, You must yield universal unlimited obedience, without any reserve; your obedience must be universal. 1. As to the matter, we must obey and believe him in all things, whatever he reveals, we must assent to it, how many objections soever ly against it, and what he enjoins, we must do whatever difficulties are in the way, of both we have an instance in the case of *Abraham*, *Rom. iv. 19, 21, 22.* 2. Ye must hear him in whatever manner he speaks to you, not only when he speaks as God doth here from heaven the throne of glory, where the greatness of his present appearance reflects majesty upon his words and commands; but even after, when he is down from the mount, and speaks to us in his ordinary teaching, or by the mouth of the meanest instruments he is used to employ, even when the meanness of their appearance shews, as it were, the evidence of their being his servants, even then we are to discern, hear, believe and obey his will. 3. We must yield universal obedience as to times, we must hear and obey him at all times, constantly, even unto the

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This we have insisted upon more largely, because of its suitability unto the present occasion, it is what you are called to, and is the best return that you can give the Lord for his kindness upon this occasion, to hear his son.

IV. We are now come to our next enquiry, how these solemn and special manifestations do confirm or establish in the faith of the fundamental truths of religion, in answer to this noble question, which would deserve more time than we can now allow it. I shall only offer the few following particulars.

1. In divine manifestations, there always is a convincing and overpowering light or evidence that sweetly sways the mind and draws it powerfully to assent and rest satisfied in the truth of what is thus manifested. Evidence is always the ground of persuasion, the more there is of it, the more quiet and easy the mind is; and this is the glory of divine manifestations, that there is much of this convincing evidence in them, whatever doubts the soul may be under before, yet when the Lord appears, at the brightness that is before him, these dark clouds flee away, and the most wavering soul is pleasantly constrained to give up all his doubts, and yield its assent to divine truth enforced by this overpowering light, like *Thomas* that cries out *My Lord and my God*, John xx. 28. or like *Nathanael*, *Rabbi, thou art the King of Israel, thou art the Son of God*; John i. 49. and like the *Israelites*, even the rebellious *Israelites*, *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said, The Lord is the God, the Lord is the God*, 1 Kings xviii. 39. much more the evidence convincing, where there is a renewed understanding to discern it, objections cannot stand before it.

2. In divine manifestations, there is not only overpowering evidence, as to the truths; but there is instructive light, as to the nature of the things revealed; either somewhat formerly not known, is made known, or what was formerly known now more distinctly and clearly revealed, saving manifestations always inform or enlighten the mind. Now, as the evidence of the manifestation overpowers unto an assent for the truth, it fixeth a conviction, repels objections, making them unable to shake the mind while it lasts: so this instructive light, as to the nature of the things revealed, takes off the force of them, removes, if duly improved, the ground of them in time coming, all objections flow from ignorance of things, and still as knowledge

edge increaseth, these evanish. In this manifestation here made to the disciples, we have a pleasant instance of this sort, here we have a sweet instruction obviating and laying a foundation for answer to the principal objections against Christ, four things were much insisted on against him. 1. Some stumbled at him, because his appearance was mean; there was no form nor comeliness in him, why he should be desired; but in this manifestation, the vail was taken off, and he was seen in his glory, and they were instructed that he had robes of glory, though for a while he thought meet to lay them aside. 2. He was accused of opposition to *Moses* and the *prophets*; here in this manifestation, the sweet harmony and consent betwixt them is evidently discovered, while *Moses* the famous founder, and *Elijah* the zealous reformer and asserter of the Old Testament œconomy meet with, sweetly converse together, and agree with Jesus Christ. Many stumbled at his death, as inconsistent with the honour and glory of the *Messiah*; but here the sinews of this objection are cut, he never appeared to them in such glory as now, when he is upon a solemn conversation on this subject; for we are told this by the spirit of God, that they spoke of his decease, which he should accomplish at *Jerusalem*. 4. Many stumbled at his pretending and owning himself the Son of God, but here his pretensions are justified by a glory answerable to that relation by the attendance of *Moses* and *Elias*, two of those whom God had most honoured among the sons of men; and to crown this, by a voice from heaven, directly asserting the justice of his pretensions. Thus we see that divine manifestations sweetly instruct in the nature of the things revealed; and thereby cut off objections, whereby the mind is not only composed, but brought in quiet. Many other instances of the like nature I might bring from scripture, but the narrow limits to which our time is confined, will not allow.

3. There is always in these special and solemn manifestations, the taste of the sweetness and goodness of the Lord himself, and of divine truth, as a beam from that sweet fountain of life, that draws over the will and affections to cleave unto the Lord, and unto truth; and this is the real spring of stability and sweetness in truth. Dry notions will never keep men stable; they who have received the truth, but not in the love thereof, will be soon drawn over to quite it for delusions; but in divine manifestations

manifestations there is still somewhat of enjoyment that obliges them to think, that it is good to be there, as *Peter* says in the verse before our text; and this engages the soul to stick fast for the spring of defection is commonly the struggling of the will, and aversion of the affections; these increase our darkness, occasion wavering, and suggest prejudices against the Lord, his truth, and ways.

(4) Special and solemn manifestations of the Lord's glory are always accompanied with an experience of the power of truth: there is a manifold power attending divine truths and manifestations, they have a soul quickening, composing, warming, and soul-transforming power; and of this power the people of God have sweet experience, when he manifests himself when they see his glory, they also feel his power in the sanctuary, *Psalm* lxxiii. 2. This power makes strong and abiding impressions on the soul, that go deep into, and stick fast. When he appears in his glory, he lays the hand of his power on them and by it raises them up, and says unto them, *Fear not*, *Rev.* i. 17. This is strongly engaging, and sensible. It was the feeling of this that had a reviving influence on the disciples. *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures*, *Luke* xxiv. 32. It was not so much the notions of truth that stuck with them, as the power that went along with them. This will embolden people to avow and plead for, and stick to truth, whoever is against it, and whatever it cost them, when they find the good effects of it upon their own souls. *I am ready*, says the apostle, *to preach the gospel, as much as in me is, to you are also that are at Rome; I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*, *Rom.* i. 15, 16.

(5) In divine manifestations of the Lord's glory, there is always a suitableness unto the case; the trials and necessities of the persons to whom he manifests himself; either they are fitted to their present condition, or to duties, trials and difficulties they have been in, or shall speedily be called to. *When Abraham* is to leave his father's house, and to go out not knowing whither, to leave friends, relations and means, then God manifests himself to him as God Almighty, or God all-sufficient, one that, in the want of all things, could be all things to him.

One who could protect, be a shield and defence, and supply him, or be his rich reward and up-making for all that he could quit or lose in following God, Gen. xv. 1. & xvii. 1. When *Israel* is in bondage, the Lord manifests himself as *Jehovah*, Exod. vi. 3. that is, the performer of promises. Here, when the disciples are to be melancholy witnesses of Christ's sufferings, they get a pleasant view of his glory, to arm them for it before-hand. Now, every thing is more or less sweet to a person, as it is more or less agreeable to his case, necessities and trials; and this is that which makes divine manifestations pleasant, when they are found sweetly to suit the case, and meet with the need of the Lord's people. Nothing will please a hungry man save meat, or a thirsty man but drink. He that would despise rubies, when starving for hunger, will greedily grasp at a piece of bread. And this is the glory of divine manifestations, that they ever exactly meet with the necessities of the people to whom they are made. That which makes people desert any way they have been in, is the finding it fail them in their need, and not answer their case, but the Lord reveals that what they now need to be found in him; and this makes them cheerfully abide by him. And though at present, they know not what these things mean, yet afterwards they come to know more clearly, and this makes them stable, and engages to adhere firmly. It may be the disciples knew not well now what need there was of this view of Christ's glory, but afterwards they well understood it.

6. These manifestations always humble, and humility is the strength of all grace. When *Isaiah* saw his glory, he was deeply abased, and cried out, *Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips*, *Isaiah* vi. 5. *Job*, when he saw him, loathed and abhorred himself, *Job* xlii. 4, 5, 6. Now, self-confidence is the greatest weakness: when we trust to ourselves, we trust to a stop cut off from the fountain, that will not last: when we are strong in our own eyes, we are then weak: *Peter* was never so weak, as when proud and self-confident. On the other hand, humility is the going out of ourselves, and laying all the stress on the Lord: it has the promise of his presence, *He will dwell with the humble, he will look to him; he gives grace to the humble; he hears the desire of the humble.*

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We might add much more on this head, but we must leave it, and go on.

5. The confirmation of the doctrine is that which follows next: we might have done this at first, but ye will understand it the better now, after the truth is explained.

This truth then, that it is the great scope and design of special and solemn manifestations of the Lord's glory, to confirm people in the faith of the great truths of religion, and thereby to lead them to obedience, is evident.

1. From express divine testimonies, *And many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name,* John xx. 30. 31. And in the Old Testament, whenever the Lord makes any manifestation of himself, or promises to do it, he always adds this account of the design, *That ye may know that I am the Lord.* This is repeated in scripture, times almost without number: and from that very observable, but yet almost little observed, expression, we may notice, that even the Lord's people have need to be taught this, *That God is the Lord.* It is not such an easy matter, as many think, to come to believe that God is.

2. This was once and again spoke plainly by a voice from heaven, at this occasion, and on Christ's baptism. When the Lord appeared or discovered somewhat of his glory, it was testified by a voice from the excellent glory, that the design of all was to make them believe, or confirm them in the belief of this, *That Christ is the Son of God.*

3. This effect it had upon the disciples, it confirmed their faith, when the Lord manifested his glory; and it is observed with approbation. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on his name,* John ii. 11.

4. We find the saints taking notes, as it were, of such manifestations, for their own establishment, Gen. xxii. Abraham sets up his *Jehovah-jireh*, and Jacob his *El-Elohe-Israel*, Gen. xxxiii. 20. to keep this in their minds, That God, the God of Israel, he is the God, and he seasonably steps in, in times of extremity.

I am sensible that many other things would have pertained

been under our consideration here, and had been necessary, if our time could have allowed.

1. It might have been enquired, What are the fundamental truths, wherein the Lord would have his people confirmed? I might have condescended on many: he designs to have them established in the faith of this, *That the Lord he is God*; in the faith of these truths that concern the person of Christ, that he is the beloved Son of God, God in our nature, and in those that concern his offices, that in him he is well pleased with us, and that acceptance with him is only to be had by his beloved Son; with many others of the like nature.

2. It might have been enquired, Wherefore is it necessary that the Lord's people should not only believe the truths, but that they should be confirmed or established in the faith of them. In answer to this, I might have shewed you at length, that they are great things, and so not to be received, but upon the strongest grounds, that there is much to venture on them; we are to venture all for time and eternity on them; and therefore we had need be well secured that the foundation be good, when we venture so much: there are many things to try us, and we had need to be well established. The great design of the devil is to overturn the foundations; and therefore we had need to be well fixed in them. We cannot glorify God, unless we offer him reasonable service; and our service can never be reasonable, if we are not clear and well fixed, as to the grounds we go on. In a word, we might have made it appear that our safety, our comfort, our usefulness for the good of others, the honour of religion, and the glory of God, are all secured in this matter, and cannot be obtained, but by being established in religion.

3. It may be enquired, How Satan's delusions, and divine manifestations may be distinguished. In answer hereto I might have offered many things. True divine manifestations are to be expected (whatever GOD sometimes, especially at first conception, may do in a way of sovereignty) only in the way of conformity. While, like the disciples here, we are in Christ's company, they enlighten the mind in the solid knowledge of God; and then we are led to know more distinctly, that he is the Father, and that Christ is the way to him, that in him he is well

pleased, John xiv. 21. 23. They are always suitable to the scriptures; they lead to obedience to hear the Son of God. Isa. viii. 20. they humble the persons that get them, Job xlii. 5, 6. they endear the Lord and his way, Psal. lxxiii. 1.

4. Here also it might have been enquired, What influence hath this confirmation in faith upon obedience? And in answer to this, I might have shewed you that it strengthens the principle of obedience, which is faith in the word; it strengthens the motives to obedience; it takes away hindrances; quickens the soul; but these things we must wave, and go on to the application.

It now only remains that we draw some inferences, or make some short improvement of the point hitherto discoursed; and because we have already insisted long, here we shall be short.

Is it so then, that it is the great design of divine manifestations to confirm the people of God in the faith of the great truths of religion, and lead them to the obedience of faith? Then we may infer hence,

1. Surely Atheism and unbelief are deeply rooted in the hearts of all; and even the Lord's people, by nature, are much under their power as others: if it were not so, why would be the need of confirming, establishing manifestations?

2. All have reason to lay their account to meet with assurance about the truths of religion. When the Lord is at so much pains to establish, it says, that shaking trials are likely to come, he doth nothing in vain.

3. It says this to you, that establishment in the faith is a matter of very great moment and importance; otherwise God would not, besides all ordinary means for begetting and strengthening faith, give such special and unusual manifestations.

4. Learn here also how abominable that principle is, which many have in their heads and mouths, That there is no need to look what peoples principles are, if they live but well. To make men live well, they must not only have good principles, be sound in the faith, but be well rooted and established in it; and this is not so easy a matter as many take it to be.

5. Think it not strange that ye meet with tossings about fundamental truths in religion; you see the Lord's people are met with such, and here the Lord provides help against such trials.

6. We may hence learn also, that our own reasonings will not quiet our souls: peace and joy are only to be had in believing; and divine manifestations are needful to draw out, and strengthen faith.

7. Wonder at the condescension of God, that manifests himself to the sons of men. I shall now pass many other inferences for instruction, trial, reproof, and wind up all in a short address.

1. To these who are strangers, to all saving and special manifestations.

2. To such who miss them at present, and lament their want of them.

3. To those to whom the Lord has, in any measure, manifested himself, at this time.

1. There are some of you who never had any special manifestations of the Lord, and care not much for it. This is too evident to be denied.

2. Are there not many of you who live in sin, walk in darknesses, in the practice of love and regard to, known evils? If you say you have any manifestation of, or fellowship with God, you are by himself pronounced *liars*, 1 John i. 6.

3. Are there not many of you who never saw any beauty in Christ, to make you prize him, or part with any thing for him? You never saw that worth in the pearl, as to engage you to think of parting with all, that you might get the pearl, Mat. xiii. 44. 46.

4. Are there not many of you, who have no desires of, use of, nor endeavours after discoveries of the Lord's glory? It is otherwise with them, who ever were brought to know any thing of the Lord, Psal. lxiii. 1, 2. Psal. xxvii. 4.

5. Are there not many among you, who do not trust Christ, either as to righteousness, direction in your way, or strength? And is not this a clear proof, that ye know him not? For they that know his name, will put their *trust in him*, Psal. xlv. 10.

Now to you who are in this case, I have a few things to say: And,

1. You are yet in darkness: when the Lord is so many ways before you, and you have never discerned his glory, it must certainly be because there is no light in you,

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2. You have lost the benefit of all ordinances; for this is the drift, the great scope of *them*, John xx. 30, 31.

3. In particular you have missed the mark here in this ordinance; for the design of it is to hold Christ forth, that he may be *discerned*; and since you have not discerned him, ye have missed the aim of it.

4. If then now, or formerly, you have approached this table you have eaten and drunk unworthily, incurred the guilt of his body and blood, eaten and drunk judgment to yourselves, *not discerning the Lord's body*, 1 Cor. xi. 29.

5. Ye are poor unstable souls. 'Tis impossible ye can be firm or stable in any matter of religion. No man knows God save the person to whomsoever the Son manifests or declares him.

6. If trials come, and ye meet with any assault as to the truths of religion, ye that never had any manifestations, will soon quit your hold, and give up with truth. They that have not received truth in the love of it, will soon give it up.

7. Ye have no part nor portion in heaven; you have no title to it. This can never be had save by Christ, and an interest you can never have in him, save by his manifesting himself to you. Ye can have no notion of it: he only can tell you what heaven is, and what you are to expect beyond time; and so ye cannot really desire that which you cannot know. I know what all think, O! if we were in heaven! But this is only a heaven of your own imagination and framing. But it is impossible for any unrenewed man to wish seriously for that heaven, where holiness and happiness are forever linked together. In a word ye are not meet for it; for it is only the viewing of the Lord's glory that changes us *unto his likeness*, and so makes us meet for *the inheritance of the saints in light*, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Well then, poor miserable souls, 1. Bethink yourselves seriously of the misery of your case. 2. Cry to God, that he may open your eyes to see it. 3. Cry that the Lord may manifest himself to you. 4. Wait on him in the way of duty. 5. Guard against sin, known sins that do provoke the Lord to hide his face. Beware ye rest not in this miserable case, estranged from God, from Christ, and from saving light.

2. I shall next offer a word to them, who, tho' it may be formerly they have known somewhat of divine manifestations, now they are at present.

1. Perhaps the Lord hath manifested himself, but ye have miskened him. This was the case with many, when Christ came in the flesh. Because he appeared not in all that glory that they expected, they would not suffer themselves to believe it was He. Well, perhaps it may be so with you. Though Christ hath manifested himself as the heart-searcher, discovering sins, and as holy, in reproofing you for them, as God Almighty, inviting you to trust him, and so forth; yet because you have not been filled with joy, got apples and the like, you think you have got nothing.

2. If it really is so, is there not a cause why he has hid himself? Well, search it out, turn inwards, observe how matters stand, how they formerly have been, and now are; and if there be iniquity in thy hand, then remove it far from thee.

3. Beware of sitting down in this case, without at least, the ordinary evidence of the Lord's countenance: that is dangerous; for here is the plain road to backsliding. 1. We miss and are uneasy about it: we want his presence for a while, and our trouble grows less; and then we want, and turn easy, and content to want. This is a dangerous case.

4. Yet quarrel him not; he must be allowed his own will, even in the more ordinary manifestations of himself in the course of our walk with God; much less is he to be limited in this, where there is more of sovereignty in the dispensation.

5. Entertain kind thoughts of him, even when he hides himself.

6. Let him hear oft from you, when ye see him not.

7. Keep his words, and then you are in the way to get this want supplied, John xiv. 21, 23.

8. Be humble; he has promised to look to the humble, Isaiah lxvi. 2.

9. Stir up yourselves to take hold on him, wait on him in all duties of his appointment. Go yet a little further, and then,

10. I say, *In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* He shall be seen in due time; he will manifest himself distinctly to you, and make you to hear his voice, and behold his glory, to your unspeakable comfort.

3. I shall now close all with a word to those to whom the Lord has, upon this occasion, manifested himself in a special and so-
on way. And,

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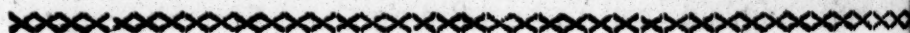
1. We say to you, Try well that ye be not deceived with delusions, in stead of manifestations. When Christ offers the treasure, Satan is then ready with his counterfeit.

2. Do not rave, and talk of building tabernacles; this will not last, the disciples must down from the mount again.

3. Be humble, mind, these manifestations will not keep you from mistakes; ye see the disciples fell into mistakes, when on the mount, and fell in their walk afterward; therefore be humble.

4. Look up for divine teaching, how to guide your manifestations; what use to make of them.

5. Be sure ye mind that this is always one great design in them, to establish and confirm you in the faith of the first and great truths of religion, and pray improve them to this purpose carefully.



S E R M O N IV.

DIVINE INFLUENCES:

Or, The Cause and Cure of these under spiritual Decays.

H O S E A xiv. 5.

*I will be as the dew unto Israel: He shall grow as the lily
and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.*

THE Lord Jesus Christ, the great physician of souls, hath set a tryft with his people in this place, and intimate design of meeting with you here, in a familiar manner, at his own table. His servants are come before, to prepare you for meeting with him, and to hold forth to you, what you need from his hand, what help he is capable to afford you, and what are called to look for from him.

Among the many cases he undertakes to cure, there is one mentioned in this chapter, viz. that of spiritual decays, and of his skill in curing this, we purpose, as the Lord shall enable, to discourse at this time; because it is one of the most dangerous and stubborn diseases incident to christians, and a disease, I am afraid, too too common this day: And finally, it is a disease, to the cure of which the discovery the Lord makes of himself in this sacrament, is remarkably well adapted.

The prophet having, in the foregoing prophecies of this book held forth the general apostacy of the church, and threatened the body of the people with utter and irrecoverable ruin, comes, in this chapter, to address himself to the godly remnant, to whom the Lord designed mercy. And,

1. He gives them a general hint of the danger of their case, they were fallen by their *iniquities*, *ver. 1.* joined with a call to return, and apply to him for cure.

2. He gives them suitable directions, as to their duty, and tells them how they were to apply, *ver. 2, 3.*

3. He promises healing, 1. in general, *v. 4.* at the beginning, and 2. in particular, the removal of the cause of their diseases, *v. 4. and 3.* in the words of our reading, *a perfect cure*; and describes the glorious effects of this in the subsequent verses, *5, 6, 7, 8.*

4. He concludes with a solemn admonition, that it would be found their wisdom to improve, and their folly to reject this kindly tender, *verse 9.*

The words I have read contain a gracious promise of a cure of their spiritual decays: and for understanding the meaning of them, we must notice,

1. The persons to whom the promise is made; it is *Israel*, the remnant of his church, to whom the Lord designed mercy, and who should comply with the gracious call, to return, given them in the foregoing verses.

2. We must take notice of their case, in which this and the other promises of the context supposes them at the time, and that is, they were spiritually decayed; all their graces were in withering and languishing condition, like grass parched with heat, from which rain and dew have for a long time been withheld, till it is dried up by the roots. That this was their case, and even the case of the godly among them, is evident

from plain representations every where through the prophecy *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yet grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.* Ho vii. 9. Nor is there one direction or branch of the promise here made, but what speaks this plainly to be their case.

3. We must notice in the words, the thing promised, and that is a restorative, *I will be as the dew*: what the dew is to the grass, that I will be to him. The thing intended is fresh discoveries of the Lord, and supplies of his Spirit, working such effects on them, as the dew has upon the decayed grass.

4 We are to observe the engagement of the Lord's faithfulness for this, *I will be as the dew*: It is not merely that he can but that he will, eventually, really and certainly be so.

The words thus shortly explained afford us this point of doctrine

That the Lord JEHOVAH has, by promise, bound himself to his decayed Israel, upon their return to him, as the dew, a fountain of reviving and restoring influences, or supplies of grace.

Isai xlv. 3. *I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and flow upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:* Ver. 4. *And they shall spring as among the grass, as willows by the water courses;* and as he has promised so he has done. Psal. ciii. 2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and get not all his benefits;* ver. 3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities who healeth all thy diseases:* ver. 5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed as the eagle's.*

In the further prosecution of this point, it will be needful to speak,

I. Of the cause of spiritual decays, that we may know the nature of the disease.

II. Of *Israel* the people who may expect this recovery.

III. Of the means of their recovery, where the force of the expression, the Lord's *being as the dew*, will fall under our consideration.

IV. Some reasons of the point may be condescended on.

I. It is needful to speak somewhat concerning the disease to which this promise in the text relates. What that is, all the promises of the context clearly hold out; the promises of recovery, restoration say, that their case was a decayed, withered one; and the nature of that restoration says, that their disease lay mainly in spirituals; for all the remedies are such as shall be cleared in our progress. Well then, for clearing

matter, I shall offer you some remarks concerning the case.
And,

1. It is to be observed, that all the true *Israel*, at conversion, have a principle of spiritual life imparted to them, that of its own nature is apt to grow, thrive, and bring forth fruit. They are alive unto God, through *Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 11. Alive from the dead, verse 13. *Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified*, Isa. lxi. 1. They are ordained, that they should go and bring forth fruit, John xv. 16. As the new nature is of itself disposed to grow and thrive, so there are many means suited to promote its growth, and supplies ordained for that end; through which, usually, for some time after conversion, they that are planted by his grace in the courts of his house, grow up apace.

2. But this, notwithstanding spiritual decays, do frequently, in the course of their profession, sooner or later befall many, even of the true *Israel*. The work of God is at a stand, life and strength languish and decay; there is a sad defect as to inward vigour, outward beauty and fruitfulness. This might be made appear by instances not a few; this seems to have been the general case of the church of *Sardis*, the professors in it had a name to live, and were dead; Rev. iii. 1. as also of the church of *Laodicea*, Rev. iii. 15, 16, 17. Such also befell *David*, after his sin in the matter of *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*, that for a long time he was under a decay is past question, and whether ever he altogether recovered that wonted vigour in the ways of God is a question. It is said, *The Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David*, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. reporting, that his last ways came not up to his first. Others, know, as the margin of some of your Bibles has it, render the words otherwise, *The first ways of his father and David*. And I know not if even this, tho' it takes in *Asa*, who was another notable instance of this sad truth, will exculpate *David*. But we need not dispute this, the instances given are sufficient; and others, such as *Solomon*, might be mentioned, whose decays run to great a height, that were it not for the testimony of the Lord, it would be questioned whether ever he had true grace; and his recovery is so veiled, as may be a warning to all. But our own experience, in these days wherein we live, afford too many instances.

3. These decays usually take rise from one of two things; either from some sudden surprisal in sin, some notable provocation, thus it was with *David*; or, they creep on secretly, by insensible degrees, gradually advancing, until the persons are brought to the sad case above-mentioned, and afterward to be more fully explained; and, we conceive this last way is the more usual way of their coming on.

4. This case, however decays creep on, or from whatever occasion, is truly one of the most sad and dismal conditions that can well be thought of. Let us but view it as it is represented, more may be learned from the context, where the recovery is opposed to it.

(1) In this case, the conscience lies under the defilement and burden of unremoved guilt: Hence the first word put in their mouth, *verse 2.* is, *Take away all iniquity*, and *verse 1.* *Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

(2) On account of their sins, they were plunged into many straits both spiritual and outward. *Thou hast fallen from the happy state thou wast in, into a miserable one.*

(3) In their straits, they, as it were, forgot wonted relief, had lost confidence in God, doubted of gracious reception, as is evident from the direction given them, *verse 2.* and run foolishly to carnal confidences, *Asbur, &c.* as we see, *verse 3.* where by *Asbur, Horses*, and other gods, we are to understand all carnal confidences, to which a people, when backsliding from God, are ready to betake themselves; people in such a case, answer the character given of *Ephraim*, *Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria*, *Hos. vii. 11.*

(4) Evidences of the Lord's free love and mercy were withdrawn, as appears by the promise, *verse 4.* in this case, people are under the hidings of God's face.

(5) His anger was many ways intimated, as is likewise evident from what has been said. And from *verse 4.* God not only forbears wonted smiles, but really frowns on backsliders.

(6) Influences, the dew from heaven, as appears by the words of our text, are, in such a case, withheld; the Lord commands that no rain rain on them; makes their heavens barren, so that the supplies of the Spirit are withheld.

(7) Hereon growth is at a stand; they do not, till the recovery

al come, grow as a lilly. In the close of this verse, wherein the text lies.

(8) Hereon the very root languisheth, faith and love begin to fail, and wax cold, till restoring grace come to make them cast forth their roots as the Cedars of *Lebanon*.

(9) Barrenness follows, his fruit-bearing branches do not spread, till the Lord send a revival. *Verse 6.*

(10) Sap and beauty, the beauty of a profession, and sap or vigour in the duties of a profession, fail. The beauty of the olive, that is, through the abounding of inward moisture, beautiful even in winter, is not then to be met with, *verse 6.* And hence,

(11) The favour of holiness, transmitting a scent to strangers, and commending religion to those unacquainted, which is *verse* as the smell of *Lebanon*, of the Cedars and Frankincense trees, not then to be felt.

(12) And to complete all, general usefulness to others follows, *verse 7.* They that dwell under the shadow of decayed professors, are little better.

Here then is a short but sad view of the case, all drawn from the context. The guilt of unpardoned sin lies upon the conscience, calamities hereby are brought on; in straits, vain confidences are tried and trusted to; evidences of divine love are withdrawn, wrath is intimated, influences of the Spirit, the dew of heaven, are restrained; growth is at a stand; faith and love, the rooting graces, languish; leaves wither; fruits fail; smell is lost; usefulness is gone. And is not this a true character of some, who have some time of day promised another thing.

5. We remark, That as this case is at any time truly sad, so there are some special seasons wherein it is doubly sad. I shall name some of them.

(1) Decays, when they turn common, in times of general defection from the power of religion, are extremely dangerous. If a christian fall, when all about him are lively, there is hope of a revival, sitting under their shadow, he may revive as the vine, and grow as the vine, *verse 7.* But when all are dead, none to cherish, exhort, awaken, quicken one another, this is truly sad, and the case very hopeless.

(2) It is sad, when it befalls professors, at a time when they are under special calls to liveliness, when the glory of God, the credit of religion, and the like, require a testimony from professors,

fessors, for their defence against a generation of profane and impudent Atheists and opposers; this draws on the curse of *Meroz*, that came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

(3) When difficult duties are called for, when professors have strong work set them, contending against sin, mourning over abominations, strokes impending to be held off.

(4) They are sad, when they befall professors in the approach of winter, sad and sharp trials, that require vigour to bear them out, and may prove dangerous to the most healthy constitutions; such threaten death to persons already decayed. How dangerous then is the case of decayed christians in our day when I fear all the four concur?

6. We remark, That as this case is sad, so it is not easily to be got out of: For,

(1) It is seldom taken notice of, till it come to an height; and diseases come to an height are not easily cured.

(2) It affects the noble parts, the root, faith, and love, the heart, the fruit, &c.

(3) It is universal, it affects the whole man, and the more universal any disorder is, the worse still it is to cure.

(4) Insensibility usually make up one part of the distemper and still the less sense there is of the disease, the less hope of cure: for it argues an universal weakness of the more noble parts. See *Hosea* vii. 9. formerly quoted.

7. However desperate the case seems, yet it is not quite incurable; *There is Balm in Gilead, and a physician there*; there is one that can heal backslidings, and thoroughly cure them. And this leads me on,

II. To enquire who they are that may expect a cure. For answer, we say, The promise in the text, of this great physician, is directed.

1. To *Israel*; to the church of God, a people in covenant with God. There is no cure but what is to be had from the covenant; and it is only *Israel* who have a claim here.

2. Whereas, all are not the true *Israel*, who are of *Israel*; that is, who are members of the church by outward profession it is to be observed, that this promise belongs only to the true *Israel*; these who are truly ingrafted in Christ by true faith. There are stony-ground hearers, and thorny-ground hearers who seem to flourish for a while, and afterwards decay and

nothing; there is no recovery promised to them; *they want* Mat. xiii. 21. and therefore they are never to revive again, and may renew them, but this is a new work; but this promise belongs not to them. To them we may apply the words of *Job*, concerning man's state, *Job* xiv. 10, 11, 12, 14. But *they* that are the true *Israel* have root; and therefore, to use the words of *Job*, there is *hope* of such trees, *That though they cut down they may sprout again, and that their tender branches will not cease. Tho' their root wax old in the earth, and their branches die in the ground; yet through the scent of water, of this* mentioned in the text, *it will again bud, and bring forth branches like a plant,* *Job* xiv. 7, 8, 9. Wherefore, ye that find ye decays, and find that it is not with you as in months past, we need to look if ye are the true *Israel*.

3. The promise is to *Israel*, after they have born the indignation of the Lord for their sinning against him. It is to the truly remnant, after the Lord shall have made them smart for their departing. Many times, though the Lord forgive his people's sins, and heal their backslidings, yet he will take vengeance on their inventions, as the *Psalmist* has it, *Pla. lcx. 8.* Therefore such have need to take on the church's resolution, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him,* *Mic. vii. 9.*

It is to *Israel* returning, and seeking a recovery from the Lord, in the way of commanded and suitable duty: though the Lord heals backslidings *freely*, of sovereign grace; yet he will dispense this grace in such a way as may be for his glory: and therefore, when he has a mind to recover a people, he sends calls to repentance, as here, *verse 1.* He sends directions, as *verse 2, 3.* He makes those calls effectual, and sets them in his way, not in the fanciful paths of mens devising. And when *Israel* is thus once awakned, and put upon suitable work, then it is that the Lord graciously steps in, and heals their backslidings, and proves to them as the dew. Which leads me,

III To enquire into the means whereby this recovery is sought about, and the cure of this wonderfully sad, and seemingly desperate disease effectuate. And this is held out to us in the promise, *That the Lord will be as the dew unto them.* The meaning of this must now be opened, and we conceive the expression leads to observe three things,

1. The

1. The cause of this recovery. The Lord letting out supplies of his Spirit.

2. The nature and manner of working of those supplies of spirit, whereby the recovery is effectuate.

3. The effects of this cause wherein the recovery consists.

1. This expression of the Lord's being as the dew, points to the cause of this blessed cure, change or recovery; and as this we are by it taught,

(1.) That it is the Lord Jehovah alone that is the cause of it, even he who came on this design, that his people might have life, and might have it more abundantly, John x. 10. The dew is from the Lord, as the expression is, Micah v. 7. It is he alone that heals backslidings, that pours out supplies of grace on the dry ground. There is no other hand, save his, that cures this disease, Hsa. xlv. 3. This is so plain in the expression that he who runs may read it.

(2.) This expression intimates, that this restoring grace is issue of free love. *I will be as the dew, He has mercy on whom he will have mercy.* There is no other rise of it, but the sovereign will of God, his free love, *He will love freely, verily.* And therefore in our text it follows, *He will be as the dew.* And indeed what the wise man observes of the king's favour, best of all said of this king's favour, it is as the dew on the grass, Prov. xix. 12.

(3.) This expression points out to us this, that there is a communication from him of fresh supplies of the Spirit, and of grace, as the dew sitting upon the herbs, though apparently keep itself distinct and intire, yet secretly insinuates of its moisture into the plants; so the Lord really, without losing anything himself, lets out of his Spirit Supplies of grace, gives grace and more grace from his fullness, John i. 16.

(4.) But this is not all, it is not said merely that the Lord will give dew, but that he *himself will be as dew*, importing that That it is by a new and near manifestation of the Lord himself an approach or drawing near of God himself to the soul, that the soul is restored, and supplies conveyed. The first life is imparted to man at conversion, by an approach and manifestation of the Lord in his glory to the soul: the God of glory's appearing to Abraham in Mesopotamia, Acts vii. 2. imparted the first life to him; so in like manner, it is a new approach of the Lord

himself to the souls of decayed believers, it is the rising of the sun of righteousness on them, with healing under his wings, that is the spring of their recovery, and of all supplies of grace, Gal. iv. 2.

(5.) It teaches this also, That the outward means whereby this approach is made, this discovery is given, are the promises of the word, as they are applied in ordinances of his own appointment, word and sacraments, through the influence of that spirit that is manifested by them. This, I say, the Lord's holding himself forth as the healer of backslidings in the promise here reports. And,

(6.) Upon all this it follows, That the means of recovery on our part, must be faith closing with, eying, imbracing, depending on God, or the Lord holding himself forth thus as the dew of the promise, by the outward means, the ordinances of worship. Thus ye see, the promise looked into gives us a sweet account of the cause of this cure. But this is not all; for,

2. From this also we may learn the nature and manner of working of these supplies, that are the cause of this revival. That it is by fresh supplies of the spirit of the Lord, that this recovery is carried on, is clear from what has been said already, and from the promise formerly cited, Isaiah xlv. 3. and from this, that graces are all fruits of the spirit, in the first production and increase of them, are also ascribed to him, Gal. v. 22, 23. This being clear, the expression as to the nature and manner of working of those supplies doth teach us, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(1.) That they are of a heavenly extract and original, *Hath rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?* Job xlviii. 28, says God to Job. They are not the effects of human industry, but of the Lord's own power. The dew tarrieth not for man's industry to fetch it down, nor doth this heavenly dew, Mic. v. 7.

(2.) That these supplies in their outward appearance, in so far as they are by us discerned, look to be but small things; so the dew is but a small thing, yet works great effects. In like manner it is with this heavenly dew; To many it looks so small, they can have no discerning of it; They cannot see it fall, they will not see it lying.

The expression teaches us the suitableness of those supplies. The dew when it falls upon the face of the earth con-

veys and insinuates into all that vast variety of plants, supplies suitable to the nature of every one of them, and to the nature of all the different parts of the same plant, the root, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit. In like manner, every one from the Lord, when he comes as the dew, has suitable supplies, and supplies suited to every grace.

(4.) The expression intimates the plentiful measure of the supplies, like the dew that falls in abundance. And,

(5) It points out the imperceptible and secret manner of the conveyance of the recovery by them. The dew is not discerned in its falling, far less in its operation insinuating moisture into plants discerned, or their growth by it. All that can be said is, that by means of this they grow up, we know not how, the word is, *Mat. iv. 27.* much more are the supplies of the Spirit, and their manner of operating imperceptible, and not to be discerned by us.

(6) The expression points out the wonderful equality and wisdom in diffusing or overspreading of these supplies, so as to reach every part: Dew falls on the grass, and is distributed of all of it, with inimitable equality, on all hands it wets, so that no part wants; so the Lord distributes these supplies with wonderful wisdom, when he falls as the dew on the soul; not a part escapes, to allude to that expression, *2 Sam. xvii. 12.*

(7) The suddenness of the operation of these supplies: the dew falls down suddenly: so it has very quickly remarkable effects.

(8) To add no more, the powerful efficacy of those supplies is held forth; the dew fallen upon the mown grass, yea, when it is withered, will make it revive again.

Thus we see this expression teacheth us, as to the nature of these supplies, that they are of a heavenly original, suitable, plentiful, small in appearance; as to the manner of their conveyance and working, that it is insensibly, or secretly, equally, or with due proportion, suddenly and effectually. And this leads me,

3. To speak of the effects of these outlettings of the Holy Spirit, for the recovery of his people, they will be such as the dew has, and we find them condescended on in the text in context; and I shall only briefly hint at them, as they are

in the context reckoned up, and elegantly set forth under several metaphorical expressions or similitudes.

(1) The first fruit or effect, is growth in all grace. *He shall grow as the lilly.* A humble beautiful flower, that delights in the valley, and grows apace, even among thorns: formerly their growth was at a stand, now when the dew falls, they grow again apace.

(2) The second effect of this dew, is rooting in faith and love: love and faith are compared to the roots of a tree: because, as faith takes hold of Christ, and by love cleaves to him, drawing nourishment, sap and life, and stability from him; so a tree, by its roots, takes hold of, cleaves to, and draws nourishment from the ground, compare *Eph. iii. 17. Gal. i. 23. 2 and 7.* Well, in this case we are told, *They shall send forth their roots as Lebanon,* or as the margin reads it, *they shall strike forth, or start forth on all hands,* in spite of all opposition, their roots.

(3) Hereon, abounding in all the duties of religion follows, *his branches shall spread,* or as the margin has it, *shall go out.* This thriving root shall branch itself out, or abound in all duties toward God, and toward man; as to many of which there was a neglect before.

(4) Next, There follows the beauty of a thriving and lively, or sappy profession, *His beauty shall be as the olive tree,* that, thro' abundance of juice, retains its life and beauty, even in winter.

(5) Upon this there ensues a continual savour of religion in the whole conversation. *His smell shall be as Lebanon.*

(6) Hence again, usefulness to others, especially in promoting and cherishing religion in them, follows. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the Vine.*

(7) And finally, hereon there shall be abundance of savoury fruit both in him and others, that are cherished by his influence. *The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon,* where the choicest and best grapes were to be found.

IV. The reasons of the point come next to be enquired in: and here we must be very short. And,

1. That God has bound himself thus by promise, for the recovery of his decayed and backslidden people, is ultimately to be resolved in free grace and the sovereignty thereof: as at first he has mercy, because he will have mercy, and on whom he will

have mercy; so likewise he continues, upon the same account to pursue a design of mercy.

2. Another reason is, the immutability of his nature. Having once engaged in a design of saving a soul, he cannot, without contrariety to his nature, give it over, nor quit it, and therefore must, in compliance with his own nature, hold on and revive. *I am God, and change not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed*, Mal. iii. 6.

3. Christ has not only purchased, but interceeds for all that is necessary to the completing eternal redemption for his people and their union with him secures them in the fruit of all his purchase: but this is a wide field, and I may not launch out into this ocean.

Let us now make some improvement of the point. And,

I. For Information.

IS it so, that God has bound himself by promise to revive decayed *Israel* upon his return. Then,

1. We may hence learn the sovereignty of free and rich grace, that dispenseth all saving blessings, not only without, but contrary to our desert.

2. See here also the wonderful skill and power of the great physician, he can cure the most desperate diseases, an universal decay of grace not excepted.

3. We may hence learn whence so many decayed christians in our day, do not recover; It is not because there is no balm in *Gilead*, nor physician there; but either because they are not of the true *Israel*, and so want root; or, because they return not to the Lord who can heal.

4. We may here learn the fulness of provision in the covenant, the ground of the saints stability, and their happiness hereon, with many other useful and important things, on which we may not now insist.

Many other uses of the point, lest I should weary you, I shall now pass, and conclude in a few words to several sorts of persons, of whom, I suppose, this auditory is made up. And,

1. Some, and I fear not a few, are so far from looking whether they are thriving and flourishing in grace, that they have never yet been concerned to have the truth of grace, or

sure, that they are really implanted in Christ. To such we

1. The grace of this promise is not designed to you; it is to the *Israel* of God, and the returning penitent people of God, who are sensible of their strayings; of these ye are none: and have no lot nor portion in this matter.

2. Nor is the feast designed in this place for you; it is designed for those that have the life of grace to strengthen them, and to recover those who are decayed, to revive their spirits: and therefore,

3. We charge you, upon your peril, meddle not with this ordinance, as what belongs not to you. But,

4. If you will do it, I shall assure you, it will not make you grow; you are not capable of growth wanting root. Yea,

5. It will involve you in the guilt of blood, even of the body and blood of the Son of God. And therefore,

6. Your work is in the first place, to seek to get off the old stock of nature, and be planted in the Lord's house, engrafted in Jesus Christ, and to invite you and engage you to this, consider,

(1) Here ye see, though your case is desperate like, yet it is not really altogether without hope. Here is a physician that undertakes the cure of very dangerous diseases. Yea,

(2) He can cure yours: as he cures spiritually decayed souls; he can quicken the dead, and call things that are not, as though they were.

(3) He has already given proof of this, in that all his people, when first he undertook for them, were dead, Eph. ii. 1, 2. and quickened them.

(4) He has declared that he designs, among dead sinners, to have a seed to serve him: and since he has promised to give life to them that are dead; therefore,

(5) Wait on him, and seek life, and seek it with your whole heart.

(6) Though you cannot plead merit, nor claim any particular promise; yet throw yourselves on sovereign grace, and wait on it: others who have done so, have sped well, and ye have no reason to dread the issue.

Others there are, I make no doubt, in this assembly, who are, and who have, for a long time, been concerned about religion,

religion, but yet still continue in a thriftless, barren and unthriving condition; so that one know not what to make of their religion, and they know not themselves. To you I say,

1. This is a comfortless, and a very dangerous condition, ye are not able to stand in a fair day, and how will ye bear a storm? Ye know not whether ye are branches deriving sap from the root, or withered ones that are designed for the fire. If ye wither now under the droppings of ordinances, ye are like to be in a worse case, if these are quite withdrawn.

2. Whence is it thus with you? You are not straitened by Christ; he came that his people might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, John x. 10. And he hath provided promises of growth and increase, and revival: and ordinances are designed for this end; particularly, this is the design of the Lord's Supper now to be celebrate.

3. Ye must therefore look into yourselves for the causes, look whether you have taken hold of the root, whether ye are in Christ, and whether if ye are so, ye are not negligent in improving this union, by maintaining communion with him: There must certainly be something wrong here.

4. Up and bestir yourselves vigorously, dive, search into the causes of this; cry to him that searches *Jerusalem*, that search the heart and reins, to let you know your case. Improve the promises of growth, and use the means, particularly with caution and fear, in the way of the Lord's appointment, in this sacrament. Those strengthening and restoring influences that, in the text, are held forth under the similitude of bread and wine, are here held forth, and offered under the signs of bread and wine, the means of life, strength and nourishment.

III. Some I hope, there are, though I fear they may be few, who do thrive and flourish like the lilly; and if any such there are, to you I only say,

1. Be sure that you be well rooted. Seeds that drop among thorns, and in stony places, may have a fair spring, but a small harvest, Matt. xiii. therefore try yourselves, you may easily be in mistakes. Some that only seem to be in Christ, may flourish in outward profession, and turn to nothing: therefore try. Do your duty now, especially before the Communion, to try to purpose.

2. Mind, tho' you are in Christ, that spiritual decays may

you; this ye have heard cleared: and therefore be not high minded, but fear.

3. If you would continue in this thriving and flourishing communion, for the Lord's sake seriously improve union with Christ, abide in him, John xv. 4. that is, keep up constant communion with him in ordinances, and especially in these that are appointed for growth, among which this ordinance is one, and a principal one: and therefore slip not this occasion.

4. Rest not in the bare performance of duty, but cry for the dropping of this dew, for the Spirit's influences, which only can make ordinances useful.

IV. To such who have been lively, but now are withered, we could have spoken at large; this being the case to which the text relates, but time will scarce allow: Only here,

2. For your information, we say, here you may learn,

(1) That your case is exceedingly dangerous.

(2) That it is more especially so, at this time when it is common.

(3) That if evil and trying times come, which we have reason to fear, it will be yet worse.

(4) Yet it is not desperate, there is one that can cure.

(5) Others have been cured.

(6) In this ordinance he offers himself suitable to your case. There is, (1) Love in the highest instance, to quicken love. (2) The liveliest view of the demerit of sin. (3) Supplies of spiritual strength, and many more specifics, if I may allude to the word used by physicians.

2. For direction, many things might have been offered, but this chapter, which has been all opened, affords plenty of them; and if the Lord give you understanding, a serious view of it, and what has been advanced for clearing it, will suggest them in great variety. The Lord bless his word, and make it good on this occasion.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V.

The Flight of Shaddows,

AND

The eternal Day-break, for the Comfort of benighted Souls

CANT. ii. 17.

Until the Day break, and the Shaddows flee away. Turn my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe, or a young Hart upon the Mountains of Bether,

WE need not spend time in telling you that this book is designed to represent that intimate fellowship that is betwixt Christ Jesus and his church, consisting of souls espoused to him. He is the bridegroom, she is the bride, the spouse he spoken of.

Her happiness in the enjoyment of his presence was unexpressible, *verse 3, 4, and 5.* of this chapter, when she sat under his shadow with great delight, and found his fruit sweet to her taste: but in the 8 verse, he has withdrawn; yet so, that she hears his voice, sees him coming at a distance, inviting her to sweet fellowship with him, and directing the removal of what might obstruct a good correspondence.

In the preceeding verse that introduceth our text, the Spouse encouraged by this evidence of her husband's kindness, 1. Comforts herself under present distance in the continuance of the mutual relation betwixt him and her, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* 2. However, she had not his sensible presence as before, yet he was still with delight carrying on the work of the Church's salvation, and keeping up, if not more open and sensible, yet real and sweet communion with the church, and particular believers in it. *He feedeth among the lillies.* And then she subjoins the words of our reading, wherein we have these three things considerable.

1. The Spouse her present case, she is benighted, there are shadows betwixt him and her.

2. Her comfort is, the hope of an approach of a glorious day.

3. Her work and desire till that day come. *Turn my beloved.*

I. We have her present condition, and this we may take up in two or three particulars.

(1) Her beloved is at a distance, is absent as to her sense. This is clear from her prayer for his return.

(2) She is benighted. Hence she longs for the day-break. It is true, she was not, believers are not absolutely in darkness at any time, as the rest of the world are; but at least her light was like the prophet's day, neither altogether dark nor light. And,

(3) The consequence of this, or cause, perhaps, is, there are shadows interposing betwixt her beloved and her. And it is the interposition of those that her sight of the Lord is obstructed in whole, or in part. I need not stand to tell you what is that is intended by a shadow. Here we are to understand with the cause and the effect by it. Whatever obstructs a clear view, or clouds our sun, and that imperfection of light, and unsatisfying discoveries of things thence arising, are both understood.

II. We have her comfort, and that is in the hope that a clear day shall, ere long, break, and all these shadows flee away, that all obstructions of light, imperfect resemblances, or whatever steps from a full and satisfying view, shall be gone.

III. We have her desire, or what she would have in the interim, till that day come. *Turn my beloved, and be like a roe, or young hart upon the mountains of Bethel.* The meaning is in the interim, till that day come when I shall have uninterrupted communion with myself. Be pleased here in the way to allow me precious visits, as my case requires. Come over all the intervening mountains of my provocations, that obstruct, as the young hart or roe skips over hills swiftly, easily, pleasantly. This is what she seeks after, what she prays for.

Interpreters find some difficulty, whether to join the first part of this verse with the last part of it, or with the close of the 6th

It is plain that this *until* relates to the one or other: there is a full stop before and after this clause, which leaves us liberty to apply it either way. There is nothing in the sense that

that carries it unavoidably to the one more than the other. do not know but it may be the safer way to make it respect both, thus, Since thou wilt never fail to keep up communion with thy people here, till they are brought to the full enjoyment of thee, when *the day shall break, and the shadows flee away* condescend to allow me, among others, till then, to share in the gracious visits.

If it is enquired, what day is this, in the prospect of which the spouse comforts herself? I answer, One of two must be understood: the gospel day, when the Lord shines in ordinance the *sun of righteousness arises with healing under his wings*; Mark iv 2. this is called *the day spring from on high*, Luke i. 78. Or the day of Christ's second appearance; this is called the *morning*, Psal. xlix 14. in which the just shall have dominion, and the *rising of the day star in our hearts*; 2 Peter i. 19. which is opposed and preferred to the clearest discoveries and manifestations of God in ordinances. Most part of judicious interpreters incline this way, and with them we join.

It may also be enquired, What are we to understand by *mountains of Bether*? Whether there were any mountains of this name in *Canaan*, is disputed; but we are not concerned since the scope of the words is plain, and is also favoured by the signification of the word. By them we must understand whatever interposes betwixt her Lord and her. These are *mountains of division or separation*.

Thus you have a clear and easy view of the words: it remains that we take some practical truths from them. Every branch of them affords ground for useful observations. I will only offer one from each part of the words, and single out what may be most proper for the present occasion, and discourse shortly. Well then, in the words we took notice of the following things.

I. The spouse her present case, and that, as it has been explained, affords us this Note,

That even they who are espoused to the Lord, while here, are benighted, and are kept from that free and full communion with their Lord which they desire by, interposing shadows.

II. We have her comforts as to this, which gives rise to the second observation.

That it is the comfort of believers, that a day approaches,

will chase away all those shadows that now obstruct their communion with the Lord.

III. We have her desire in the interval, till that day dawn : whence observe,

That it will be the desire and constant endeavour of all that are in Christ, to have frequent visits from the Lord, such as their constitution admits, and their need requires, till that day come.

It is the second of these we design briefly to insist on : it comprises the first in it ; and in the application, if time allow, occasion may offer of speaking somewhat as to the third point. The doctrine is this,

That believers have the prospect of a glorious day approaching, the breaking whereof will chase away all those shadows that now intercept their full communion with the Lord. We need not be long in the proof of it. Light, we are told is sown for the righteous ; Mal. xcvii. 11. and the springing of that light is the day we now speak of. That such a day there will be, we have all assurances that can be : we are told, *that the night is far spent, and that the day is at hand*, Rom. xiii. 12. We are given to understand, that in due time this day will dawn, and *the day-star arise*, Peter i. 19. Yea, we are told, that it is a day never to be succeeded by a night, Rev. xxi. 25. This is that day of the redemption of the *sons of God*, Eph. iv. 30. even the great and notable day, mentioned Acts ii. 20. elsewhere called the *day of God*, 2 Peter v. 12. This is that day when the *sun of righteousness* will appear with a seven fold lustre in his highest elevation, which cannot fail to scatter all shadows. But in further prosecution of this point, we shall,

I. Name some of those things that are called *shadows*.

II. Offer some reasons why they are so called.

III. Speak somewhat of the breaking of this day, that will scatter them, and chase them away.

I. We are to enquire, What are those shadows that now intercept betwixt Christ and believers ? I answer,

1. There are the remainders of natural darkness, that draw a veil over all the things of God, and fill our minds with mistakes and prejudices about them, and misapprehensions of our Lord. Natural men are covered with gross darkness, so that they cannot perceive the *things of God*, but reckon them *foolishness*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. yea more, they are all *darkness*, a mass of ignorance, Eph.

v. 8. *Nothing but blindness.* Now though believers are translated out of darkness into marvellous light; yet darkness in part remains: *We know but in part, and see but darkly, as thro' glass;* and in so far as this obtains, it is as a shadow.

2. A-kin to this is an evil heart of unbelief, that questions all the discoveries that the Lord makes of himself, turns away the mind from the light, and raises mists, prejudices, exceptions that obscure the light of the clearest manifestations. Of the influence of this our Lord oft complained, even in his own disciples. Many a sweet discovery of the Lord does unbelief deprive us of the advantage of.

3. Disordered affections, hope, fear, anger, envy, hatred, pride when they prevail in the soul, prove like marshy ground, reeds, damps, obscure the face of our sky, and withhold the light and beamings of the glorious sun, and cover all with a sort of midnight darkness. Now, as to these three, note, that they are ways our sin, as well as our misery and unhappiness.

4. Temptations, either from Satan or the world, oft-times interpose betwixt our Lord and his people, and obscure the discoveries of him, and discompose them, leading into wrong and frightful apprehensions of him, and taking off from the way of communion with him. Instances of this sort abound: all that are concerned know more than enough of this kind.

5. Frailty of body sometimes interposes and unfits for attendance on the Lord, when he might be enjoyed, as it was with the disciples, with whom, *when the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak.*

Now these two are not always our sin, though oft-times they give issue in it, and always are our unhappiness. Temptations are sins, if not complied with, I mean, such as are from without; nor is bodily frailty in itself our fault.

6. Besides all these, other things there are, such as the mysterious and dark conduct of providence, the nature of ordinances which are at least but like a glass giving a dark prospect, the sovereignty of God in coming and going, and his appearing in great variety of ways: all these, and others of the like kind, occasion obscurity.

But as to these, it must be observed, that they are not free causes, but innocent occasions of this. In themselves they are holy, wise, useful, and suitable to our present condition,

means proper for many excellent purposes becoming God, and profitable to us; yet in so far as they one way or other obstruct the full discoveries of the Lord, designed for and desired by believers, even they also may be justly reckoned among the shadows: it derogates no more from them, than the setting aside of the Old Testament institutions, as shadows, to make way for the gospel ordinances. Now let us proceed.

II. But why are these called or compared to shadows? I answer,

1. Because they either do import the imperfection of *light*, or *use* it one way or other. The first instance condescended on, *is*, *The remains of natural darkness*, imports a mixture of darkness, with any light we have, and the other things do either *use* or occasion this. Now a *shadow* is either taken for the imperfect image of a thing, or for that imperfection of the light which occasions it. You may consider *Job* x. 22. with other places to this purpose.

2. They are called *shadows*, because they *render our views of the Lord, and discoveries of him imperfect*; such as we have when the light is yet but imperfect, as it is in the first approach of the morning and twilight. We read of the *shadows of the evening*, their being stretched over a people, *Jer.* vi 4. importing such an obstruction of light, as mars clear views of things, and leaves us but imperfect discoveries of them. This is the effect of the former.

3. They are like to *shadows*, because they leave us at uncertainty about what we see. When we see but shadows, we waver, are uncertain, unsteady, and ready to hesitate; even so is it with us, as to spiritual things; while these remain, the impressions are but faint and languid.

4. Because, as shadows, if they give us not frightful representations of things, yet they leave us without that clear impression of them that may secure us against such frightful representations of the Lord, and our own mercies. When he appears to the disciples at sea, they take him for a ghost. But some of these things mentioned really do disguise and misrepresent the Lord, in this respect, they are as the shadow of death, most frightful and terrible: It is true, others do not so; yet, through our darkness, they occasion such mistaken apprehensions. In a word, shadows there is, for most part, somewhat irksome; so here there

there is, and upon that account it is, that they are so called.

5. They, like shadows, always keep from discerning the true lustre and beauty of the Lord, and spiritual things in their native glory. This always holds; we never see the full lustre and glory of things, but in a clear and unshaded light. This is the peculiar glory of pure light, to represent things, not faintly, but in their full beauty.

6. They are called shadows, because they give opportunity and advantage to such as seek to impose on us false and mistaken apprehensions of the Lord. Their endeavours could never take, if there were not some darkness somewhere, under which they hide themselves, and the snares they lay for us.

7. They are shadows, because they withhold not only light but heat in shady places; there is a mixture of coldness as well as darkness. This is desirable, as to the scorching heat of the sun; but it is always sadly our loss, to have the warming influences of the sun of righteousness withheld.

8. They obstruct comfort. Truly *light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun*: it is comfortable to want this, and especially in a spiritual sense. Now these shadows withhold it, as we see.

9. In a word, shadows make a sort of a night; they are companions of the night, and partake of its coldness, irksomeness and disappear with it; and so it is with those: but now,

III. We next come to speak of that *day break*, the prospect whereof is the comfort, joy and hope of the saints of God in their present condition. What I have to offer, I shall digest into a few ensuing observations.

1. Then, you are to observe that all who are espoused to Lord Jesus, are *children of light, and of the day*, made capable to discern light, possessed with a love of it, having got some taste of its sweetness, some glimpse of its glory. Yet,

2. Their condition here-away, thro' the interposition of the shadows mentioned, is oft times dark, cold, irksome, weary and uneasy. Many times they pass days, nay weeks, or months, without the light of sun or stars.

3. But even when it is so, this is their comfort, that there is a day a-coming, which will dispel that irksome and frightful darkness that now covers all.

4. It is confessed, that many times, if they look round

ere is no sign, no present appearance of a day, but, as it is toward midnight, darkness growing, and light disappearing.

5. Yet even then, when it is thus, they have this, which is a better ground of expectation than those appearances would be, that there is, as for the coming of the *natural day*, Gen viii 22. *erm. xxxiii. 20.* so for the coming of this *day*, a settled ordinance; it is determined, promised, and cannot fail, more than God's covenant with the night and day.

6. Poor souls that are in this condition know, that however dark it may be with you, yea though the darkness increase, yet the sun of righteousness is on his way rejoicing, as a strong man, run his race. Behold, he comes quickly; he is not slack as to promise; he advances like the natural sun, as fast when we see him not, as when we see him. This is comfortable.

7. Though it is not day, nor is the darkness fully removed, when the sun appears not; yet even then he imparts and reflects light by means appointed for that end. When the sun is under the horizon, the light he reflects on the moon, makes a part of day in the night; even so there is the word that shines, though with derived light, as a light in a dark place. 'Tis true, this is a variable light, frequently clouded as to us, tho' in itself it abides forever the same.

8. *The night is far spent.* It is long since there was mention made of his coming quickly. Darkness has continued long, and the growing of it this day is not unlike the approach of the darkness of midnight darkness, which, tho' terrible in itself, yet betrays a speedy turn.

9. The breaking of this glorious day affords all the variety of pleasure, useful, cheering, delightful advantages; yea, and greater than the breaking of the natural day doth. Come now, let us take a prospect of them, and compare them a little,

(1.) As it is with respect to the *natural night*, so it is, and will be with this night believers are now under. No sooner shall it come to its darkest, but there shall speedily appear the welcome forerunners of approaching day. The *day-star* shall arise, *Pet. i. 19.* What this is, time will not allow me now to enquire, only in the general, this is sure, that when the church's night is darkest, it shall not be long before the Lord's remnant shall have some pleasant presages arising like the *day-star* in their hearts.

(2.) As

(2) As it is with respect to the natural day-break, the poor benighted traveller shall not be long in suspense, whether what he sees is only a delusive appearance, or a presage of approaching day; for *quickly* on the back of this, shall it be, as it was in the morning of the gospel day; *in the shadow of death light will spring up*, Mat. iv. 16.

(3) As it is with the first dawnings of natural light, so here it will be, whereas all was dark just before. It will be matter of some wonder, whence so *suddenly*, so surprisingly those welcome rays spring up, the sun, the glorious spring not yet appearing.

(4) Here it may, and readily will be with the saints of God as it is with the traveller bewildered, frightened, confused with the darkness of the night, and not thinking yet of the approach of day, the first dawnings of light may, perhaps, rather increase his confusion, than relieve: (Christ's resurrection, John x. and the effect it had on them that came to the sepulchre clear this) I make no doubt but the approach of our Lord the blessed sun of righteousness may at first be somewhat frightful to some to his own remnant, as well as to the beasts of prey especially to those who are in the condition now mentioned rather poring on present darknets, than looking out for the approaching day.

(5) The first shooting rays of light do not presently discover night, or give perfect discoveries, especially of things at a distance, tho' they leave not quite in the dark as before; so here it is like it will be; much of what, ere long, is clearly to be seen, may, for a time appear, as things in the day-dawning men look like trees; we are afrighted at that imperfectly seen which afterwards will fill with cheerfulness and delight. The sweet variety of trees, mountains, valleys, towns, and all the pleasant prospect that afterwards is matter of wonder, joy of light, imperfectly seen, affords so many frightful impressions.

(6) As it is with the rise of the morning light, so it is with respect to its increase; it grows as surprisingly as pleasantly yet mysteriously as at first it sprung up, so it will be with respect to the light of this glorious day. It will, when the day approaches, make quick, glorious advances. All the accounts of Christ's glorious appearance plainly hold forth this, *It will shine more and more to a perfect day*; tho' we cannot tell how

or whence. *Where is the way where light dwelleth?* Job xxxviii.

9. As this in nature is a puzzling mystery, it is no less so in grace.

(7) When light grows, it will strike a panic fear into the hearts of beasts of prey, *devouring wild beasts betake themselves to their dens*, Psal. civ. 22. *The morning is to them as the shadow of death*, Job xxiv. 17. Though in the night they devour, they prevail, the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.

(8) When the sun of righteousness appears with the increase of pleasant light, cheering heat will come along, and the coldness of the night will be gone. It is the absence of the sun that leaves all cold, dead and lifeless. The sun's return gives new vigour.

(9) When that pleasant day breaks, sleepers awake, drowsiness goes off, the birds sing, the flowers open, things appear in their native lustre, fears vanish, the ways are clear, snares are broken, a thousand doubts that troubled before vanish, perfect views come on in place of dark and shadowy resemblances. Oh, what pleasure is here! All was dark and hideous before; now all is glorious, clear, pleasant, cheering, refreshing and beautiful. If one is abroad in the night, and observes the break of day, what a world of wonders will he see in it! But there will be yet more when this glorious day shall dawn. *When the sun of righteousness shall appear as a bridegroom.* And this leads me,

(10) To observe, that after all these pleasant and sweet beginnings, dawns of day, the *Sun himself* appears, that mass, that mountain of light, warmth, life, vigour: so here it will be. He shall rend the clouds who is our Sun, and appear in the glory of his Father, and his own, with a glorious train of saints and angels, decked as a bridegroom. Upon his appearing lesser lights will disappear; the sun, the moon, the stars, will be eclipsed, and have no glory, by reason of that which excels. The birds of paradise then shall arise out of the dust, and being changed in a moment, they who have lain among the pots shall be like doves, whose wings are covered with silver, and feathers with yellow gold: then shall they soar in the air to welcome the rising sun with a new song in their mouth. Then shall they see what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to perceive, Isa. lxiv 4.

None that had ever seen the day break before, can, by the hundred part, conceive the wonders appearing in the dawning of the natural day; and to attentive observers, tho' it is oft seen yet still new matter of wonder offers in it: much more is it here, and will be so to eternity.

Then, then, O poor benighted souls! unspeakable shall your advantages be.

(1) All these things about which you have been perplexed and confounded, shall be seen in a clear light. *In his light shall see light.* How many doubts that the darkness of the night render inextricable, are instantly dissolved, and not the least hesitation left about them? darkness is the mother of doubts, wavering, uncertainty, and all their consequences; and light chase away night, and all these children of night.

(2) But that which will add to the glory and happiness that day, will be, the perfection and strength of our discerning power: now brightness is troublesome, and we cannot steadily behold it; but then our eyes will answer the light, there will be a perfection and blessed proportion; *when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.*

(2) Here there will be *overpowering evidence*, fully satisfying the mind, and leaving no possibility of doubt; we lose much of the sweetness of the Lord's discoveries of himself, love, his grace and condescension; when we take a view of the presently unbelief comes in, How can these things be? Is it possible that such things, so great things should be to me and me? Oh! what refreshment would we find, were it not these staggerings? But then overpowering evidence will allow the least scruple to confound, or divert from delight what you shall then know to be truth. And,

(4) Quickly will ye feel the blessed effects of the *Sun of righteousness*, diseases will be healed, coldness, deadness, drowsiness will all be gone.

(5) And that which crowns all is, *there is no more night*. Here there is a succession of day and night; but then, day evermore. No doubts about truths, promises; no faint view, no more questioning your interest in them, no mountains of *ther*, no lattices of ordinances, no dark prospect more; but light day without a cloud in it, or night to follow it: all day, no corner, and the light more than the light of seven days of our days.

But it is now time that we come to the use of the point, in few inferences.

1. You see here the difference betwixt the child of light, and the children of darkness. *Light is sown for the righteous, but they compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, shall ly down in sorrow, and the blackness of darkness is reserved for them.*

2. We need not wonder to see many changes in the condition of the people of God, because it is now night with them, a season liable to many changes.

3. It is all your concernment, more especially, of you who have been at the *Lord's table*, to try yourselves, whether you are children of the light and of the day, *to whom the Sun of righteousness shall arise*, and from whom he shall chase away those shadows.

(1) Have ye ever got such a sight of the Lord, as has sullied the lustre of other things, and taken your hearts off them? *a view of the God of glory does this*, Acts vii. 2, 3, 4. *A view of the pearl makes to part with all joyfully; and forsake all for Christ*, Matt. xiii. 44, 46. Compare Matt. xix. 17. with John vi. 68.

(2) Are you sensible of, and suitably affected with the Lord's comings and goings, hidings and appearances, as we see the house was in the context, and through this whole book.

(3) Can ye live contentedly without him? Can ye bruick his hiding of himself from you? If you can, there is no light for you; you are in darkness even until now.

(4) Next, Are you among them who wait, long and look for his appearance, and relieve yourselves with the prospect of it? *such he is to appear a second time, without sin unto salvation*, 1 Th. ii. 19. ix. 28.

Now a word, and we have done.

To you who are yet in darkness, we say, (1) If you have been at the Lord's table, you sure *have not discerned the Lord's body*, and so *have eat and drunk judgment to yourselves*. Again, At present whatever you may think, it is black night with you, and all the terrors of the night belong to you. And, (3) you have no relieving prospect, the breaking of this day will be impossible to you, *a day of gloominess and thick darkness*. Any sparks that are now compassed with will be gone. And, (4) *The blackness of darkness is reserved for you for ever*, if you continue in that case;

cofe; wherefore, for the Lord's fake, bethink yourselves in time, and bestir yourselves, *look to him, who opens the eyes of the blind.*

2. I have a word to you, who are not only children of the light, but under present clearness, we say, this doctrine bids us say, (1) Mind, it is not yet perfect day with you, it is but like moon and star-light ye enjoy. Again, (2) Be sober, ye cannot tell how soon that light you have may be clouded. There are many changes in the night, and many dangers not to be seen by that imperfect day. (3) Yet while ye have it, ye do well to take heed to it, as a light shining in a dark world. But, (4) Rest not in or on attainments, but watch for the morning of this glorious day.

3. To any of you who are children of the light and of the day, but yet are at present under clouds. (1) Think not strange of this, as if some odd thing befel you: it is a case common to you with others, and is suitable to your condition hereawhile. (2) Mind, in this imperfect state, this course has its own usefulness, the night is profitable as well as the day. (3) Your darkness will not be perpetual, light is sown for you, and will spring forth speedily. (4) The darkness of your night will make the dawning of the day the more sweet. (5) Till the day dawn with the spouse, stay yourselves on the name of the Lord, and his standing relation to you. Hold by this, that *he is your beloved, and you his*; this the prophet directs to. (6) Take heed to the sure word of prophecy, and read in it from the first dawning of light till mid-day, till the sun come to full height; to allude to the practice of *Ezra, Neh. viii. 3.* we read in the law from the morning until mid-day. (7) Cry out visits till that day come, with the spouse in the text. (8) Comfort yourselves with the prospect; it surely will come, though now there may be little appearance of it, and will clear many things you cannot now see through.

I shall wind up all in a general word of exhortation, to you who profess yourselves to be the children of the light, and have approached the Lord's table; and that in the words of the apostle, *Rom. xiii. from the 2d verse, The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness. let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and*

innests, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make no provision for the flesh. Blemish not your character, dishonour not your profession, give not enemies an handle to blaspheme; live in the faith of this day-breaking; let this be your stay, your joy in this dark day, when the earth shakes and reels like a drunken man. All is cloudy and black, kingdoms tremble, crowns totter, and hearts full of desponding fears; fix on this, dwell on it. The hope of it will be your comfort, until the day-break, and the shadows flee away; and cry for Christ, that he may turn till then, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Even so, come Lord Jesus.

The End of Mr THOMAS HALYBURTON'S Five SERMONS.



F I V E
S E R M O N S

Preached before and after the
C E L E B R A T I O N
O F T H E
L O R D's S U P P E R.

By Mr JOHN WILLISON, Minister of the
Gospel at Dundee.

S E R M O N I.

Being a Fast-day's Sermon, before the
L O R D's S U P P E R.

of GOD's Withdrawings from his People,
and their Exercise under them.

J E R E M. xiv. 8.

*the hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why
shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring
man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night?*

THIS chapter was penned in time of a great dearth in
the land of Judah, occasioned by a grievous drought
and want of rain, which fell out about the latter end of king
Jehoiachin's reign: which calamity the prophet pathetically la-
ments

ments, and takes as a token of God's withdrawing his gracious presence from them : whereupon, *verse 7.* he makes a most humble confession of sin, in name of the church, disclaims any thing of worth or merit in themselves, and pleads only the glory of God's name.

The prophet's scope in the text and context is, to deprecate God's judgments, and particularly that terrible one, of his withdrawing his presence from his church and people. *Why* (saith he *verse 8.*) *shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?* and *verse 9.* *Leave us not.* So that he seems to pass from the consideration of the stroke of drought, to that of God's withdrawing his presence from them. Whence we may observe, that God's people dread and deprecate the withdrawings of his gracious presence more, than the removal of all their creature comforts, or any other judgment whatsoever.

More particularly, in the text we have, *1mo,* The gracious titles he gives to God, as the grounds on which he pleads his gracious favour and presence, *O the Hope of Israel!* i. e. the object of *Israel's* hope, whose word and promise is the only foundation of their hope. *The Saviour of Israel in time of trouble.* i. e. the helper and deliverer of *Israel* in former times of distress. And then from these grounds he doth, in the second place, humbly plead and expostulate the matter with God, in a twofold question. 1. *Why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land?* i. e. why shouldst thou behave to us at this time as a stranger, keeping at a distance from us, and inclining, as it were, to discontinue all acquaintance and correspondence with us? 2. *Why shouldst thou be as a way-faring man, that turns aside to tarry for a night?* i. e. why shouldst thou seem unconcerned about our interest and welfare, like a traveller that comes into an inn, and never enquires into the affairs of it? Or, why shouldst thou pay us but short and transient visits, as if thou wast weary of us, and ready to depart for good and all?

Doctrine. *That as sometimes it pleaseth God to withdraw himself, and behave as a stranger to his church and people; so there is nothing in the world that will be such matter of exercise and trouble to the sincere seekers of God, as such a dispensation.*

As this is plainly founded on the text, so also it is evident from many other places of scripture, and the practice of

saints therein recorded, as *Job* xxiii. 3. 8, 9. *Psal.* xiii 1, 2. *Psal.* xxvii. 9.

In handling this doctrine, I shall observe the following method. 1. Premise some things for the better understanding of it. 2dly, Shew when it may be said, that the Lord withdraws from, and behaves as a stranger to his people. 3dly, For what reasons and grounds he useth to do so. 4thly, When it may be said, that people are duly exercised about this melancholly dispensation. 5thly, Whence it is, that this dispensation is matter of such exercise and trouble to the sincere seekers of God. 6thly, I shall make some improvement of the whole.

I begin with the *first*, viz. To premise some things for the better understanding of this doctrine, and for preventing mistakes.

1. However God doth at any time withdraw from his people, yet we must remember, he never takes away his loving kindness from them, *Isa.* liv. 10.

2dly, However God may withdraw the sensible and comforting influences of his Spirit from his people; yet he never withdraws his people from them, as to his real presence and inhabitation, for the preservation and support of their spiritual life, *John* xiv. 17.

3dly, God's withdrawals from his people are never total or final, but only in part, and for a time, *Heb.* xiii. 5. *Isa.* liv. 7. God never leaves his people altogether, but is still graciously present with them one way or other; if not in respect of comfort, yet he is with them in respect of grace; if not in a way of quickening, yet still in a way of support; if not in enlivening their affections, yet it may be in enlightening their understandings; if not in giving sensible enjoyments, yet in giving hungry desires: so that the Lord is still with them some way or other.

4thly, There are various degrees of God's withdrawing himself from his people; with some of them the day is only dark and cloudy; with others it is twilight, neither dark nor light; with many it is night: with some, the sun nor stars have not for many days appeared; but with others (according to their apprehension) it is a total eclipse.

5thly, We should distinguish betwixt God's withdrawing from his people in point of comfort, and his withdrawing in point of grace. These two do not still go together; for the

first may be where the *second* is not. A believer may be deprived of the shining of God's love and favour, when yet faith may be lively, desires strong, the heart tender, and grace in a vigorous condition; but oft-times God withdraws in point of grace as well as in point of comfort: I do not mean in respect of the habit of grace, for this can never be rooted out, where it is once planted; but only in respect of the exercise and some particular degrees of grace: these may be lost, so as the soul becomes weak, and sometimes very feeble and languid in duty; the breath grows cold, the pulse beats low, and *the things that main seem ready to die*, Rev. iii. 2.

II. The second thing proposed, was to shew when it may be said that the Lord withdraws, and behaves as a stranger to his people.

I. When he withholds his wonted acts of kindness from them; sees them in trouble, and steps not in to their relief, as in former times. Of this the church complains, *Isa. lxiii. 1. Where is thy zeal and thy strength? The sounding of thy bow and thy mercies towards me, are they now restrained?* He suffers their enemies to gather strength, to rise up and oppress them, and bring them very low; and did not seem to regard their cry, nor show his mercy or power in helping them; but withdrew his hand, and behaved as a stranger that was not concerned about them. It was on this account that *Gideon* reckoned God to be withdrawn from *Israel*, when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, *Judges vi. 12.* and said, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.* But *Gideon* was so much taken with the distressed case of the church in general, that he was without the consideration of his own particular case, and says, verse 1. *Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of?* q. If the Lord were not withdrawn, and become as a stranger to us, surely he would not have suffered the *Midianites* to oppress us so sore and so long, without appearing for our help. In like manner oft-times reasons a poor discouraged believer, if the Lord were not withdrawn, why should my old lusts (which I once thought were both killed and buried) rise up and trouble me? Alas! I am left to struggle against them alone, and iniquity prevail against me; I strive to stem the tide, but it grows the more; *how long shall the enemy be exalted over me?*

2dly, When the Lord threatens to remove the signs and symbols of his presence from his people, viz. pure ordinances and sacraments; when he lets enemies combine, and carry on their plots for this purpose; when our springs are in hazard of being stopt or poisoned, and we put to seek our *spiritual bread* with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness; Lam. v. 9. This hath been the lot of God's people in this land; now indeed we get our bread at an easier rate, but alas! we do not prize it, nor grow by it. May not God be provoked when to withdraw it, or send us again to the wilderness to seek it.

3dly, When tho' the Lord continues pure ordinances and sacraments with his people, yet denies the wonted blessing and benefit thereof to them, yea blasts them; according to that sad word, Mal. ii. 2. *If ye will not hear and lay it to heart, I will curse your blessings; yea I have cursed them already.* This we fear is the case of many; they have the word and sacraments in purity and plenty, but do not find them blessed; God's Spirit doth not concur with them, and their souls do not thrive under them. Surely the Lord behaves as a stranger to our assemblies, when ministers are straitened in preaching, and people are straitened in hearing; when we that are sent to you, feel much coldness on our own hearts, and have a number of cold hearts to deal with, and a live-coal is not brought from the altar to kindle the fire.

4thly, When the Lord frowns on his people in the course of his providences, denies them outward mercies, and denounces temporal strokes and calamities, yea actually brings them on, whereby his people are brought very low; they look to God for pity, but no relief comes; their distress is long continued, and their trials lengthened out. So when Zion's captivity was prolonged, she cried out, Isa. xlix. 14. *The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.*

5thly, The Lord behaves as a stranger to his people, when he trusts them with dumb and silent rods; trials whereof they understand not the language, and whereby they reap no benefit. This was the case of God's people, Isa. lvii. 17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.* Tho' God's rod should have led him to see his sin, and lay to heart the cause of the controversy, yet he took no notice of it,

but went on in his former course: many, tho' God's hand lifted up, they will not see; they are not bettered by his dispensation.

6thly, When the Lord denies access to his people in duty and breaks off his wonted correspondence with them: they come to God's ordinary trysting places with his people, ordinances both public and private, but he is not there; they seek him, but still they miss him, so as they are put to cry with the holy man, *Joh xxiii. 3. O that I knew where I might find him*. O that I knew the place, the duty, the sermon, the sacrament where I might find him; there I would go and seek him; try prayer, (saith the poor soul) but that brings me not to him for *when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer*, as *Lam. i. 8*. Alas! I get no access to God as formerly, he carries no more to me as an alien; for when I come and knock, I find nothing but a shut door and a silent God. In a word, the Lord withdraws, and behaves as a stranger to his people, when he withdraws the manifestations of his countenance, the operations of his Spirit, and the special communications of light and the life which he useth to allow to them that love him.

III. The next thing was to enquire into the grounds and reasons, why the Lord deals so with his people. I grant, the Lord may thus withdraw from them out of his absolute sovereignty; but commonly he doth it for the correction of sin. *Isa. lix. 2. As,*

1st, When they are guilty of gross sins and scandalous open breakings, such as cast a reproach upon religion, and the good ways of the Lord, *Isa. i. 13, 14*. This is plain in David's case, see *2 Sam. xii. 14*. compared with *Psal. li. 11*.

2dly, When they turn earthly minded, and prefer the delights of sense to precious Christ, then he withdraws, *Isa. lv. 17*. They that have a strong relish for the *flesh pots of Egypt* are not fit to taste the *hidden manna*. When the *Gadarens* came that length as to prefer their swine to Christ's presence, he turned his back, and departed from their coasts, *Matth. viii. 28*.

3dly, When we turn slothful and formal in duty, and do not stir up ourselves to seek God's face, then he withdraws, as is plain from *Isa. lxiv. 7. Cant. iii. 1*. If you put off God with a bodily exercise, he will put you off with empty ordinances as

breasts: if you serve him not with your spirits, he will deprive you of his spirit. Wherefore, if you would have the Lord to be with you, ye must shake off sloth, *Arise and be doing*: according to 1 *Chron.* xxii. 16.

1stly, When we neglect or slight the *Mediator*, by whom we have access and nearness to God, we provoke the Lord to withdraw and turn a stranger to us. And this we do, 1^{mo}, When we do not look to Christ for strength to perform duty, but trust to our own strength for doing it. 2^{dly}, When we make a Saviour of our duties, and put them in Christ's room; and this we are prone to, especially when we attain to any freedom or enlargement in duty. All is well now, think we. God well pleased, this will render us acceptable to him, and atone for former guilt; and thus the glorious *Mediator* is forgot, and the idol *self* exalted in his place; which is most displeasing to God.

3rdly, When we miscarry under signal manifestations and pledges of God's loving kindness; turn unthankful, remiss, and stender in our walk, after he hath taken us into his presence-chamber, and set us under the banner of his love. We are told how Solomon sadly miscarried, even after the Lord had appeared unto him twice, for which the Lord was provoked to withdraw from him, 1 *Kings* xi. 9. And has not the Lord appeared to some of you at communion seasons, oftner than once or twice, and yet grievously have ye miscarried? Great cause have ye to mourn on this account, and beg that the Lord may not plead a lasting controversy with you for it.

4thly, When we sin under, and after great afflictions or trials appointed to reclaim us, God is provoked to leave us, Isa. lvii. 7. Has not God smitten some of you, and brought you into the furnace, so that ye melted under his hand? But when in mercy he delivered you again, ye soon forgot his healings, and returned to your old ways. Is it any wonder that he frown and behave as a stranger?

5thly, God is provoked to leave us, when we do not enter into the motions and kindly touches of his Spirit, on our hearts; the spouse neglected these, so that her beloved withdrew, turned a stranger to her, and it cost her much travel and sorrow ere he got his countenance again, *Cant.* v. 2, 3, 6, 7.

6thly, When we grow hardened and impenitent under provocations,

vocations, so as we have neither a due sense of our own sin nor of the sins of the land we live in, *Hos. v. 15. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and I will turn away my face.* Ah! Was there ever more guilt lying on a land, and less feeling of it, than amongst us this day?

IV. The *fourth thing*, was to shew when it may be that people are rightly exercised under such a dispensation, this of the Lord's withdrawing, and behaving, as a stranger to them.

1st. We may be said to be rightly exercised under it, when we are truly sensible of our loss, and of our sins as the producing cause thereof; and hence are brought heartily to mourn and lament after the Lord, as the prophet doth in the text and context, and as Israel did in the days of Samuel, 1 Sam. vii. 2.

2^{dly}, When we place all our comfort and happiness in the favour and presence of God, and are unsatisfied with all other comforts without this, count all worldly things but loss and dung; look on sun, moon, health, wealth, honours, pleasures, houses, relations, yea life and breath, as most empty and comfortless things without God; so did the prophet in the text when he addresses him with this title, *O the hope of Israel!* All our hopes are in thee, and we are poor miserable and helpless creatures without thee. And so did the Psalmist, when he saith, *Psal. lxxiii. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

3^{dly}, When we are at pains to engage our whole hearts, and all the powers and faculties of our souls, to seek after a withdrawing GOD; *with my whole heart have I sought thee, saith David, Psal. cxix. 10.* And because our hearts are deceitful and ready to start aside from this work, we should be laying ties and engagements on them to be sincere and fervent about this work, for God takes special notice of such who do so. *Jer. xxx. 21. Who is this that engageth his heart to approach unto me?*

4^{thly}, When we diligently lay hold on all opportunities, and use all appointed means for finding an absent God; like the spouse, that sought her beloved about all the city, both in the streets and broad ways, *Cant. iii. 2.* In all duties and ordinances

both private and public, our souls should follow hard after him, and pursue him closely (as it were) from one ordinance to another, *Psal. lxxiii, 8.*

5thly, When we wrestle with him in prayer for his gracious return to us, and fill our mouths with arguments in pleading with him, as the prophet doth in the text and context; 1. He pleads the glory of his name, *do it for thy name's sake.* 2. He pleads their hopeless and helpless case without him, who was the fountain of all help and comfort; *O the hope of Israel, andaviour therefore.* 3. He pleads the former experiences they had of his kindness to them in their helpless condition; *O Saviour of Israel in the time of trouble.* 4. He pleads his power; it was very easy for him to relieve them, whatever straits they were in; *why should'st thou be as a man astonished, a mighty man that cannot save.* 5. He pleads the outward symbols and pledges of his presence he had given them, his temple, his ark and tables: *Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us.* 6. He pleads the covenant-relation they stood in to him; *we are called by thy name.* Upon all which accounts, we beseech the *leave us not.*

6thly, We are duly exercised under God's withdrawings, when we hold on in our close pursuits after him, notwithstanding of discouragements and disappointments, like *Mary Magdalene*, John xx. who would not leave the sepulchre when others left it, but searched it over and over again, yea waited with patience, still looking for him, till at length she found her beloved. Thus was the Psalmist exercised, *Psal. xxv. 15, Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord.—Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted.*

7thly, When we are unsatisfied with the best means and ordinances, unless we find God in them; *David* was not content with his enjoying the tabernacle, the ark, sacrifices, the passover, and others of God's pure ordinances; but in midst of all, *heart and flesh cried out for the living God, Psal. lxxxiv 2,* hypocrites, if they have the outward means, are well satisfied; but God's presence and absence is all one to them: but sincere believers will not be put off so, if God be not in the ordinances, nothing can please them, not the most powerful sermons, though an angel were to preach them; nor the most lively communions, though a glorified apostle should come and dispense them. The absence

absence of God is such a great want to them, that nothing heaven or earth can fill up, but himself.

V. The *fifth* thing, is to shew, whence it is that the Lord withdrawing and behaving as a stranger to his people, in such matter of exercise and trouble to them.

I. Because of the incomparable sweetness and advantage to enjoy in his gracious presence, while they have it; for this is the sum and compend of all blessings, and hath all good things wrapt up in it. The divine presence brings light and health and strength, peace and comfort, yea compleat satisfaction to the precious soul that doth enjoy it; no wonder then that the people of God should be so much concerned for want of it; for then they may cry out with *Micah*, and with just ground too, *They have taken away my God: and what shall I more?* Judg. xviii. 24.

II. Because of the effects and consequents of God's withdrawing from the soul; which being very sad and melancholy are matter of great exercise and trouble to God's people: for instance, 1. There follows usually on it, a great darkness upon the spirit; as when the sun goes down, darkness covers the face of the earth; so when God withdraws, thick clouds do veil the face of the understanding, and the whole soul is such that the poor disconsolate soul is bewildered, knows not the way, nor what course to take, but is made to complain, as *Lam. iii. 2. He hath brought me into darkness, and not into light.* Alas! saith he, I know not where I am, nor how it is with me. I know not God's mind or will toward me; I see not any comfortable sign, neither know I the time how long; I meet with many dark providences, dark ordinances, dark communions: all is dark to me.

2dly, Not only darkness, but much *deadness* and *stupor* also seizes upon the deserted soul. Why are our spirits so dead in prayer, in hearing, and so dead in communicating? Is it because the Lord is withdrawn? What these two sisters said to Christ, *John xi. 21. Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;* may well be said by such a poor soul, *Lord, if thou hadst been here present in such a duty, in such a sermon or communion, my heart had not been so dead;* for as *Moses* saith, *Deut. xxx. 20. He is thy life;* so when our Lord withdraws, we are dead, and all things are dead to us.

3dly, There follows also an *unspiritedness* and disability for duty: the soul has neither heart nor hand for prayer, for reading, hearing, communicating, meditation, self-examination, or duty. Deserted *Heman* saith, *I am as a man that hath no strength*, Psal. lxxxviii. 4. *David's* complaint is much the same; Psal. xl. 12. *Mine iniquities have taken hold on me, I am not able to look up*. His spiritual strength was so wasted, that he was scarce able either to speak or look to God. Now, what is the cause of all our weakness and incapacity for duty? Oh! the Lord is withdrawn. It is a true word our Saviour saith, John 15. 5. *Without me you can do nothing*. It were happy for us, that we were more sensible of this truth, for we are most apt to trust to our own strength, and think still we can do well enough for ourselves; like *Samson*, when he had sinned away with his God and his strength, yet he went forth to shake himself as at other times, *but wist not that the Lord had departed from him*. So many are insensible of the Lord's departure, they go to communions, and think to shake themselves as at other times, Oh! there is a benumbedness and weakness that has seized on their spirits, they cannot lift up their souls to God at his table. 4thly, There usually follows, on God's withdrawing, great witheredness and barrenness on the souls of his people, their affections fade, their fruit drops, and they quickly turn like the mountains of *Gilboa*, on which there is neither dew nor rain. John xv. 6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered*. It is his gracious presence only that can make us *fat and flourishing in the courts of our God*.

5thly, We become exposed and liable to manifold dangers and enemies; for when God withdraws, our defence withdraws too. Hence *Moses* comforts *Israel* against their enemies, *Numb. xiv. 9. Ye need not fear them, (says he) for their defence is departed from them; the Lord is with us*. The Lord's presence is his people's defence against all the assaults of their enemies, whether from within or from without, against the power of their lusts, the policy of the devil, and cruelty of the wicked: But if their fence be removed, they are exposed to them all.

6thly, Another effect, which is matter of sad exercise, is, great trouble and anxiety of mind for former unkindness and ingratitude to God. Hence the *Psalmist* saith, *Psal. lxxvii. 3. I remembered God, and was troubled*. Formerly he had remembered

God, and was comforted; his meditation of him was sweet, now it was far otherwise: Oh! says he, I now remember unkindness to him that was so good to me; my conscience braids me for my unsuitable carriage: *Is this thy kindness thy friend?* Where are all thy former purposes and resolutions thy promises and vows made at sacraments? are they all come to this? Oh! thou hast sinned thy God and friend away from thee! It was the thoughts hereof that brake Peter's heart and made him weep so bitterly.

7thly, There follows on it very melancholly and unwelcome thoughts of death and judgment. When God is present with the believer, he can say, as in *Psal. xxiii. 4. Tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me.* But O! it is melancholly to think of going through that valley without him, and of appearing before him while he frowns, and behaves as a stranger or enemy to us.

8thly, Sometimes there follows a revived sense of wrath, our wounds begin to open and bleed afresh; the deserted soul driven back to the foot of mount Sinai, and begins to hear thunders and curses renewed, tho' he once thought they had been all silenced by the blood of Christ. Thus it was with Heman, *Psal. lxxxviii. 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, &c.*

Lastly, The fears of utter rejection is another consequence that oft proves matter of sad exercise to the deserted soul. Alas! I fear my case shall never be better, that my sky never break nor my clouds dissipate; that I never recover God's presence again, but be banished eternally from it; so with the Psalmist *Psal. lxxvii. 9, 10. Has God forgotten to be gracious? hath he hid his anger shut up his tender mercies? &c.* And *Psal. cxix. 8. O for sake me not utterly.*

Application.

Use I. Of Information. 1. Hence we may be informed, that there are but few true seekers of God among us, seeing there are few to whom God's withdrawing is matter of much exercise or trouble; few mourning on this account like the prophet and crying, *Why art thou such a stranger to my soul?* Many are troubled for other trifling losses, but few that can say with David, *Psal. xxx. 7. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

2dly, We may see the misery of those that are far from God now, and are like to be deprived of his presence for ever, Psal. cxliii. 27. Unrenewed persons desire not God's presence here, but say to him, *depart from us*, Job xxi. 14. and alas! their choice is their judgment, and shall be so for ever; for the Judge's sentence against them will be, *depart from me*, &c. If the Ephesians sorrowed most of all for that parting word of Paul to them, *Ye shall see my face no more*, Acts xx. 38. how much more will such a word from Christ's mouth at the last day be piercing and heart-breaking to the ungodly for ever?

3dly, How sad must the case of those be, from whom God draws, not to return again? The Spirit of God comes, and strives for a time with many; but, when resisted and grieved, he goes away; and when he once goes away from an unconverted soul, he seldom returns to strive any more. When the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, he came not again, but an evil spirit took his place, 1. Sam. xvi. 14.

4thly, Believers should not conclude that God has cast them off, because he is as a stranger to them for a time; for this hath been the lot of the dearest of God's children, yea even of his own beloved Son himself, when in this world.

Use II. Of *Reproof*. 1. To those who are so great strangers to religion, and the state of their own souls, that they know not what God's presence or absence is; and so indifferent are many about this matter, they never enquired to this day, whether God be a stranger or friend to their souls.

2dly, To these believers, towards whom God may be behaving as a stranger, and yet they are insensible of it. They are become so unwatchful, and so much charmed with the delights of sense, and their spiritual senses so dull, that they are fallen into Samson's condition, Judg. xvi. 20. *He wist not that the Lord had departed from him*.

3dly, To these who, tho' they be sensible of the Lord's withdrawals, yet are not duly affected therewith: it is not matter of serious soul-exercise to them, as it was to Jeremiah in the next, and to Job, Job. xxiii. 3, 8, 9. and to the Israelites, 1. Sam. vii. 2. *who lamented after the Lord*.

4thly, To these who are so far from being suitably exercised, and affected with the Lord's withdrawals from them, that they are still sinning him further away; by their formality in

duty, untenderness of walk, slighting of the Spirit's motions and venturing on sins against light. O believer! *is this thy kindness to thy friend? dost thou thus requite the Lord?* We do marvel to see persecutors, and haters of God, driving him away or to see Christ receiving wounds from his enemies: but O it is sad that precious Christ should get such wounds in the hands of his friends.

Use III. Of *Exhortation*, to two sorts of persons. 1. To those who are strangers to God, and know nothing of his presence. 2dly, To those who have known it, but he is become a stranger to them.

As to the *first sort*, I exhort you *in the name of the Lord* bethink yourselves, and consider your misery in this state; *lo, they that are far from God shall perish.* It is the character of these who are in a lost state, to be *without God in the world*. Now, your misery while such, is inexpressible. 1. You are utterly unfit to come to the *Lord's table*; for *what communion* *there be betwixt light and darkness?* or, betwixt those that hitherto been strangers and enemies to one another. Remember, it is only a feast for friends; strangers to God are debarred. 2dly, Your state is most uncomfortable; the sun has never shined upon you; God's face hath never shined; it is still dark night with you, and you sit *in the region of the shadow of death*. 3dly, You are under the dominion of *Satan*, the prince and ruler of darkness. 4thly, You are under the heavy clouds of God's wrath and indignation. 5thly, You sit constantly on the border of hell. 6thly, O sinner! consider what a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, an evening hour will prove to thee. When thy soul is stepping into another world, how ready will it be to shrink back, I say, How shall I appear before that God, who has always been a stranger to me, and with whom I never had the least acquaintance! Can I look for any thing but a frowning judge, and a fearful sentence? O strangers, come and *acquaint yourselves with God now*, accept of his offers of mercy, and be at peace with him through Christ; and *thereby good shall come to you*.

Exhort. II. To those who have had acquaintance with God, but he is become a stranger to them. O poor soul, be suitably weighed and affected with this dispensation; let it be matter of exerci-

upon a fast-day before the communion: it will be a heart-
less and fruitless communion, if God continue as a stranger to
us; therefore be not easy under his withdrawals.

Conf. 1. Your souls grievances can never be removed, while
God keeps at a distance from you; but they will still be grow-
ing greater: as for instance, while he is a stranger, you cannot
have light for your darkness, but darkness will be increasing:
you cannot have light for your deadness, but you will still be
growing deader in spiritual things: You cannot have appetite
for your food, but you will always be turning the more indif-
ferent about it: you cannot have protection from your enemies,
but you will still be brought the more under their power.
Things will still be growing worse, the longer God is a stran-
ger to thy soul.

Ordinances can neither be pleasant nor profitable to
us, while God is a stranger to thy soul; you cannot see any
beauty in them, while God is absent; for without the Lord's
presence, ordinances are dead, and a dead thing can have no
beauty. It is his presence that puts a lustre on ordinances, and
makes them shine, so as to confirm the friends of the gospel,
and make enemies ashamed of their opposition. It is his presence
that puts life in communions, and life in communicants, and
causes them prefer a day in God's courts to a thousand elsewhere.
It is his presence that makes ordinances fruitful, and his peo-
ple's souls to thrive under them. O! why have you such lean
and barren hearts under ordinances? It is, because the
Lord is a stranger to them. Would you have your food blest,
gospel-seasons fruitful, and your souls, under the influence there-
of like watered gardens? then seek the Lord's presence, 1 Cor.
3. 7. *It is not he that planteth, nor he that watereth, but God
that gives the increase.*

Quest. Seeing God is setting a solemn tryst with us at this
season, and it highly concerneth us to make ready to meet
with him; how shall we be exercised on this fast day, so as to
distance removed, and breaches made up, that God may not
be as a stranger to us on the feast-day?

Ans. I shall give you some advices, and draw to a close.

1. Make no harsh construction of God's dealings with your
souls, whatever they be, but justify him; leave your complaints
on yourselves, and blame your sins, that separate betwixt you
and

and your God, *Isa. lix. 2.* We have a challenge from God, that may soon silence all our murmurings, *Jer. ii. 17.* *Hast thou not procured this to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?*

2dly, Be still restless, dissatisfied and uneasy in your mind till the distance and estrangement be removed; and be expressing your uneasiness by frequent sighs, complaints and lamentation after God; sit as a widow in his absence, and let none have your love but him alone; refuse all other comforters, till he himself return; imitate the church's practice, *Lam. i. 16.* *For these things I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water because the comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me.*

3dly, Search diligently for the cause of the Lord's estrangement from you, as the *Psalmist* did, *Psal. lxxvii. 6.* *I commune with mine own heart, my spirit made diligent search.* O! when is the idol? What is the sin that hath been the *Achan* in the camp, and provoked God to turn his back? and as soon as you find it out, see that you cast out the accursed thing. Let not thine eye pity, neither do thou spare it; for it has taken the Lord away from thee. If thou canst not find it, then go humbly to God, and cry with *Job*, *Job x. 2.* *Shew me wherefore thou contedest with me.* "Lord, what is the evil, the sin or lust which thou rebukest, and for which thou pleadest the controversy? Have I quenched thy Spirit? have I neglected duty? was I formal in communicating, or unthankful for former intimations of thy love?" *Lord, what I know not, teach thou me make me to know my transgression, and my sin.*

4thly, Seek to be deeply humbled for every evil and sin that you are convinced of; and particularly, for the heinous aggravations of them, say, "Oh Lord! I am guilty in thy sight; I have sinned against more light, more mercies, more vows, and more proofs of thy loving kindness, than others: I have gratified *Satan*, hardened the wicked, reproached religion, and dishonoured God more by my sins, than others do; so that thou mayst justly frown on me, and make the solemn day which will be a day of feasting, rejoicing and gladness to thy children, a day of darkness, gloominess, and distress to me."

5thly, Plead by faith the Redeemer's blood, for removing the estrangement, and bringing thy soul nigh to God; for nothing else can do it, according to *Eph. ii. 13.* say, "Lord, tho' I de-

serve

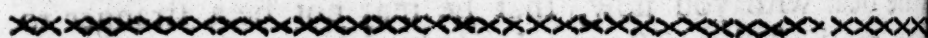
serve not to taste of thy supper, but to meet with a frown, instead of a smile, a breach instead of a blessing, a cup of wrath, instead of the cup of the New Testament; yet behold the blood of my surety, and be merciful to me. Lord! I have broke all thy commands; but has not my surety fulfilled them all? I have indeed affronted thy justice; but has not my surety satisfied it? I have deserved thy wrath; but he has endured it. Remember not what I have done against thee, but what he hath done and suffered for me; and let me be accepted in him who is thy beloved Son."

6thly, While God carries as a stranger to thee, be not thou a stranger to the throne of grace, but continue *instant in prayer* for the return of his gracious presence; plead the great need ye have of it, and the helpless case you are in without it. Beg, however he deal with you now, that he may not be a stranger to you on the feast-day. Say, "Lord, if thy presence go not with me, carry me not hence: What will a communion-feast avail me, without communion with thyself in it? I go not there for bread and wine, but I go to see Jesus: and what wilt thou give me, if I go from thy table Christless? O let Christ appear, and be made known to me in the breaking of bread. Let me enjoy thy lightsome and reviving company in this state of pilgrimage and trouble. Descend into my heart by the influence of thy grace, and quickenings of thy Spirit, and let me ascend unto thee, by the breathings of faith, love and desire. Lord, grant the request of an importunate petitioner, and come over the mountains of my guilt. Lord, stand not at a distance behind the wall, but shew thyself thro' the lattices of thy ordinances, and let me see the goings of my God and King in the sanctuary. Oh! let me not go away empty from an inexhaustible treasure, cold from the sun, dry from the fountain, hungry, sad, and comfortless from a feast of love. But, O! let me meet with my Saviour there see his face, and hear his voice; and let me come from his table with my pardon sealed, my corruptions subdued, my graces quickened, my heart enlarged, and my soul refreshed, and encouraged to run the ways of thy commandments, and so inseparably united to thee, that no temptation may ever be able to dissolve the union."

Object. O! saith some poor soul, I fear all my endeavors will be

be in vain; for I have communicated unworthily before: I have shed the blood of Christ, and sinned against light; so that I doubt, and fear that my day of grace is past, and *I am cast out of God's sight.*

Ans. However dark your case be, yet surely it is no darker than *Jonah's* was in the whale's belly; who, tho' he never heard nor read of any in such distress; yet when he is concluding *am cast out of God's sight*, he aims at a believing look to God in Christ, *Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple, Jonah ii.* Mind also *Abraham's* case, tho' he was an hundred years old and his body as good as dead, yet he believed in God that raiseth the dead; yea, he believed, and hoped against hope. Let us help us to imitate him. *Amen.*



S E R M O N II.

A Preparation Sermon,

Before the LORD'S SUPPER.

The happiness of being in Covenant with GOD.

Psalms cxliv. 15. Latter Part of the Verse.

— *Happy is that People, whose GOD is the LORD*

THERE is nothing in the world that is so much talked of and less understood, than the business of a happy life. All the world is in quest of *happiness*, some expecting to find it in this, and some in the other thing. The *worldling* looks for it in riches, the *philosopher* in knowledge, the *ambitious man* in honours, and the *voluptuous man* in pleasures. But how miserably are they mistaken! they seek happiness from the world, and from things that can never suit the wants, nor satisfy the vast desires of the immortal soul. True Christians are the wise men in the world, for they seek happiness where in

it is to be found, viz. in the enjoyment of God, who is the center of bliss. And they who attain to this, must surely be the happy men, for the spirit of God declares them so in my text: *happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*

In this psalm, the royal *psalmist* doth bless and magnify the Lord for the signal mercies and favours he had received from him; and from his former gracious experiences, he is encouraged to address God for future mercies, both to himself and his kingdom: particularly, he prays for deliverance from public enemies, and the manifold calamities of war; for the establishing of peace and tranquility, and for the prosperity of the nation; for the flourishing of their families and children, and for the increase of their flocks and cattle: and, in a word, that his people might abound in peace and plenty. Then he pauses, and makes a reflection upon the nations prosperous circumstances, which he had prayed for; *Happy is the people, that is in such a case*, happy they, who have such temporal prosperity and abundance, who have no want in their families, nor complainings in their streets. This is the judgment of the flesh, and the opinion of most men: but the *psalmist* presently corrects himself, and retracts his former judgment, and prefers the judgment of faith, to that of sense: yea, rather, *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* As if he had said, "The former estate indeed is very desirable for a nation or people; but *Israel* or the people of God, their true happiness doth not consist in these things that are common to others with them: but only in this peculiar privilege, that the great **Jehovah**, who is Lord of heaven and earth, is their God by covenant and special relation. That this God is their God, and they have a special interest in his love and favour, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. Whatever portion such have in the world's good things, surely they are happy." And let others have what they will, if they want this covenant relation, they are certainly unhappy and miserable; which they can never be that have it, want what they will; seeing the having an interest in God as ours, makes up the want of all other things; for all blessedness and happiness is included here. *Blessed and happy is that people whose God is the Lord.*

Doctrine, *That it is the greatest happiness we can possibly attain unto, to be in covenant with God, and to have God for our God.*

David was still of this opinion through the whole course of his life. *Psal.* xvi. 5, 6. *Psal.* xxxiii. 12. And he sees no cause to alter it at his death; for among his last words, he declares, that this sweet covenant-relation was *all his salvation*, and *all his desire*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

The method I propose for handling this subject, shall be, To enquire when it may be said, that a person or people are in covenant with God, and have a special interest in him as their

2dly, What is imported in this great privilege, to have God for our God.

3dly, How this privilege appears to be the top of our happiness.

4thly, Make improvement of the whole.

I begin with the *first*, When it may be said, that a person or people are in covenant with God, &c.

And for clearing this point the more, I shall, *first*, consider *negatively*, and show what it is not; and *secondly*, *positively* wherein it doth really consist.

I. *Negatively*, To stand in a covenant-relation to God, is not to be understood here. 1. Of our being under the bond and engagement of the Covenant of Works. Tho' it is most certain, that all *Adam's* posterity, by virtue hereof, are engaged to God, to perform perfect obedience, and fulfil the whole law of God, yea, and by breaking it, are obliged to pay the penalty thereof, bear God's curse, underly death, and satisfy God's infinite justice; and so all of us are naturally in covenant with God in this respect. But oh! we have no happiness, no comfort by being so; seeing we have broke the Covenant of Works, and incurred the penalty thereof: for, tho' we still stand under engagement to God by it; yet he is loosed from all obligation to us, to make us happy: yea, by breaking it, he is under engagement to destroy us. Oh! we cannot, by this covenant, plead any interest in God as *our God*, or *Father*; no, we can only look on him as *our law-giver*, *our judge*, *our punisher* and *enemy*. That is all the relation that God stands in now to us, by virtue of the Covenant of Works.

2dly, There is more requisite to make up this covenant-relation to God, than that blessed covenant of redemption, which God entered into from eternity with his Son Jesus Christ, as our head and representative, for saving the elect. That glorious

transaction

transaction is indeed the *foundation* and *rise* of our covenant relation to God; but doth not *formally* constitute and make it up. For an elect person cannot be said to be in covenant with God from eternity, unless by God's appointment and designation: he is never *formally* in it, till he believe, and thereby ratify and approve what Christ did from eternity engage for him, and personally consent to take God for his God in and through Jesus Christ the Mediator. So that you see the *Covenant of Redemption* will not save you, nor instate you in covenant with God, if ye can say no more; there must be something done in and by you, to entitle you to that covenant of redemption, and to invest and possess you of the privileges and blessings therein promised to Christ our head; and this is only done by the subsequent ratification of that covenant and treaty, made with the elect in time by the preaching of the gospel, which is called the *Covenant of Grace*.

3dly, There is more in this covenant-relation to God, which makes us happy, than our being *visibly* and *externally* in covenant with God, by an outward profession of christianity, and subjection to gospel ordinances: for thus, every church that hath the word and sacraments, is in covenant with God. Hence the Lord says to the church of the *Jews*, Ezek. xvi. 8. *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*. They were visibly and externally in covenant with God, by their subjection to his ordinances and institutions. They all did partake of the seal of this covenant, *viz. circumcision*: and hence, when a visible church makes defection from God, he threatens to come and *avenge the quarrel of his covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 25. All the members of a visible church are *federally* in covenant with God by their profession of Christ, and being baptized in his name; but such an external covenant-relation to God, will not make us happy: therefore, let us beware of resting on it; and let us seek earnestly to be really and internally in covenant with God.

4thly, There is more in it than being *nationally* in covenant with God, by virtue of a solemn transaction entered into, and subscribed by the rulers, nobles, ministers and representatives of a land; whereby they, with the consent of the whole nation, bind and engage themselves and their posterity to the Lord. This did the nation of the *Jews*, and so they were God's covenanted people above all other nations of the world; but yet

this *national covenant* did not entitle them to saving blessings, or give them an interest in God as their God in a saving way : for many were in that national covenant that never came to be in a gracious state, tho' yet they received many special favours and deliverances upon the account of it. So we in this land have the honour of being nationally in covenant with God, which indeed is our glory, and perhaps the ground of many national mercies and deliverances ; tho' it is the spring of saving mercies, nor that which entitles us to God as our God in a saving way. Many may profess to own this *national covenant*, that never took hold of the Covenant of Grace, and gave themselves to God according to the tenor thereof.

5^{thly}, There is more in this, than the drawing up the form of a *personal covenant* with God, professing to consent thereto, and subscribing it with the hand. For all this may be done in such a manner, as will not intitle us to God as our God in a saving way. This work, tho' good in itself, and profitable to many ; yet it may be performed by some in such an hypocritical, formal or legal manner, as doth make it an abomination to an holy God, that looks for truth in the inward parts.

But II. *Positively*, We come to be in covenant with God in a saving way, when we are taken within the bond of the Covenant of Grace, and do consent sincerely to the gracious terms of it ; for it is only by virtue of our coming into this covenant, that we have ground to claim this happiness of *having God for our God*. Now for us to come into the bond of this covenant of grace, is by faith to *take hold of God's covenant*, as it is called, Isa. lvi. 4. And this we do, when we are thoroughly convinced of our sin, misery, and undone state under a covenant of works, and do hence betake ourselves to the new covenant, or gracious method of salvation proposed to us in the gospel, through Jesus Christ and his righteousness ; and do cordially acquiesce in, and approve of this noble contrivance, and accept of Jesus Christ as our Mediator, surety and peace-maker with God : and in him do sincerely make choice of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be our God and portion ; and also give up ourselves soul and body to be the Lord's, engaging in the strength of our great surety, to abandon sin, live for God, and walk with him in newness of life, as becomes his covenanted people. Now, when our souls are helped and determined, by the Spirit of grace, to do

all this heartily and sincerely, then do we enter among that happy people whose God is the Lord.

II. The second thing in the method, is to enquire into the import of this great privilege, to have God for our God. *I will be your God*, is the greatest promise and substance of the covenant of grace, being the great thing stipulated on God's part therein; *Jer. xxxi. 33.* and indeed it is the sum and compend of all his other promises. And imports these things,

1st, Reconciliation and friendship with God, *I will be your God, i. e.* I will be no longer an angry judge, but a gracious reconciled God to you; my justice is appealed, wrath pacified, *My wrath is not in me*, I have found a ransom in Christ; he is the propitiation for your sins.

2^{dly}, A near relation betwixt God and us, yea, nearer than any relation among creatures. *I will be your God*, implies, I will stand you instead of all relations. 1. I will be a *Father* in Christ to you, adopt you for my children, take you into my family, I will pity and provide for you, I will bequeath to you a heavenly inheritance, you are heirs of God, and co-heirs with my eternal Son.—— 2. I will be a *husband* to you, *your Maker your husband*, *Isa. liv. 5.* I will marry you to myself, I will cloath you, enrich you, and provide a noble dowry for you.—— 3. I will be your *king*, I will take you for my subjects, I will govern you, protect and defend you from all enemies. Yea, I will be your *physician*, your *shepherd*, your *guide*, and instead of all relations to you.

3^{dly}, *I will be your God*, imports a right and title to God, and that is in him; intimate communion with him, and a communication of all good things from him. Nay, there is still more in this expression than can be unfolded by words; there is more in it than, I will be a father, friend, husband, benefactor, &c. to you: more in it than, I will give you heaven, and everlasting life, or all the blessings of heaven and earth, time and eternity: No, I will give you more, I will give you myself, a *HOVAH*, a whole Deity, *i. e.* all that is in me, all I am, I have, all I can do is thine. O the magnificent bounty of God! for when he had no greater, no better thing to bestow on his people, he bestows himself on them.

You may say, How can this be? An infinite God, so great, so glorious, we are not capable of receiving, comprehending, or enjoying

enjoying him. *Ans.* So far as you are capable to receive and enjoy him, he is yours; all that is in him is given to you for your benefit.

1st, All he is *Personally*, i. e. the three persons of the glorious Trinity are yours, *God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* *God the Father* is yours to love you, elect you, and contrive redemption for you, *John xvi. 27. The Father himself loveth you.* 2. *God the Son* is yours, to be a ransom for you, to satisfy justice for you; yours to be born for you, to live, to die for you, to rise again for you, to ascend into heaven for you, to sit at God's right hand for you, &c. All this is plain from *Isa ix. Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.* And *Can. 16, My beloved is mine.* 3. The *Holy Ghost* is yours, to apply this redemption to you, to change your hearts, to teach you, to sanctify you, work in you, dwell in you, to conduct and guide you to glory, *1 Cor. iii. 16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.* So you see, O believer, whatever God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is, can do for your salvation and happiness; they are yours, made over to you in the covenant of grace.

2^{dly}, All he is *essentially*, his infinite essence is yours, i. e. his glorious attributes and perfections. 1. My *mercy* is yours, O believer, to pardon your sins and deliver you from guilt, to sympathize with, and comfort you in all your trials and afflictions. 2. My *wisdom* is yours to provide for you, to counsel and direct you, and to turn all things about for your good. 3. My *omnipotence* is yours, to guard and protect you from all your enemies, to support and preserve you to salvation. 4. My *goodness* is yours to enrich you, bestow grace and glory, and bestow good things on you. 5. My *omniscience* is your overseer, to watch over and warn you against approaching dangers. 6. My *holiness* is your fountain of grace, to sanctify and make you holy. 7. My *omnipresence* is your companion, to attend and solace you in all places and conditions. 8. My *justice* is your rewarder, to bestow heaven on you; and also your avenger, to punish those that wrong you. 9. My *alsufficiency* is your inheritance, giving you complete and perfect happiness. My *unchangeableness* is the rock of your security. My *faithfulness* your pledge and surety, for the accomplishment of all my promises to you, and my *eternity* is the date of your happiness. So that,

ver, you see, all God's essential perfections are made over to
 ee in the covenant of grace, and therein thou hast an unsearch-
 le treasure. In God's attributes, there is a suitable remedy
 all these maladies and miseries which sin has brought on
 ou: his wisdom cures your ignorance, his grace your guilt,
 s power your weakness, his mercy your misery, his goodness
 ur evil, his faithfulness your inconstancy, his holiness your
 purity, his riches your poverty, and his fulness your wants.

Lastly, *I will be your God*, imports, that all that God hath shall be
 ade over to you, 1 Cor. iii. 21, *All things are yours*. All mine are
 ine. As for instance, 1. All my *promises* are yours; the pro-
 iles both of this life, and that which is to come; my promises
 pardon, my promises of healing, my promises of sanctifica-
 on, my promises of quickening and strength, my promises of
 ough bearing and comfort in trouble, my promises of grace
 d glory; they are your inheritance.

2dly, My *gifts* and *graces* are yours, faith, love, hope, fear,
 umility, patience, and all the fulness that is in Christ is yours;
 all these graces are yours as armour to defend you, jewels to
 rich you, and cordials to refresh you, while you sojourn in the
 ildernesses.

3dly, My *creatures* are yours. My creatures on earth are yours
 o serve and sustain you, my angels in heaven are yours to guard
 d encamp about you. The earth is your walking and so-
 urning place, the heavens your country and inheritance. In
 word, O believer! my ordinances and sacraments are yours,
 o strengthen and feed you; my providence is yours, to make
 all things work for your good; my rod is yours, my kingdom
 yours; nay, my eternal Son Christ is yours, all he has done
 and suffered, even his whole purchase is yours: life and death,
 his world and heaven, *all are yours*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. Behold,
 s when there was a covenant made between *Jehosaphat* and the
 ing of *Israel*. *Jehosaphat* promised *Ahab* whatever he had or
 ould do, 1 Kings xxii. 4. *I am*, says he, *as thou art, my people*
thy people, my horses as thy horses; so in the covenant of grace,
 whatever God hath, or can do, is made over to you. But what
 o I speak? for no created mind can conceive, nor the tongues
 f men and angels, shew forth the full import of this word, *I will*
be your God.

III. The *third thing* proposed was, to shew how this privi-
 lege

lege of having God for our God, in covenant, appears to be the top of our happiness. And this doth evidently appear from these things.

I. From the vastness of the portion, which believers have in a covenanted God, as above described. There is more comprehended here, *than eye hath seen, ear hath heard, or the heart of man can conceive*. In this covenant of grace you have all that is good, all that is great, and all that can make you happy. You have covenant presence, covenant provision, covenant conduct, covenant protection, covenant support, and covenant strength for all duties, trials and performances in this world: and you have eternal glory covenanted to you for the world to come. Now, can any thing be so satisfying to the renewed mind, as to review this vast portion? It is pleasant for a man to view his temporal interests, to walk about his buildings, planting gardens, flock, fields, &c. But what are these, to this portion of the believer? It was a ravishing prospect that *Moses* got of *Canaan* from mount *Nebo*: how pleasant was it to view the lovely hills, the fruitful valleys, the winding rivers, the beautiful gardens, and flourishing trees, in that incomparable land. But all this was nothing to the believer's covenanted inheritance. View the covenant, and see who can number the promises and blessings contained in it: time would fail to mention them: read the scriptures from end to end, and behold a dazzling and glorious sight! As the heavens are bespangled with stars in a winter night, so is God's word and covenant with shining promises. We may allude to that passage in God's covenanting with *Abraham*, Gen. xv. 5. God brought him forth abroad, and said, *Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be*. Look, O believer, to the firmament of the covenant, and tell the stars the promises, if thou be able to number or weigh them; and shall also the blessings and benefits be, which thou hast to inherit.

II. To be in covenant with God, must be the top of our happiness, if we consider the suitableness of the promises, and blessings of his covenant to all our wants and exigencies. All that we stand in need of, and all we can desire is fully provided for here. O believers, what want ye? what fear ye? what are ye troubled with? here it may be suitably answered and remedied.

Is sin and guilt your trouble? In this covenant is pardon and redemption. Are your sins great? Here is the Redeemer's blood that cleanseth from all sin. Are ye condemned by the law's sentence? Here is a sufficient righteousness for your justification and acquittance. Are you poor? Here is fine gold. Are you blind? Here is eye-salve. Are you naked? Here is white raiment. Are you starving? Here is the manna and the fattened calf. Are you diseased? Here is the balm of Gilead. Are you chained prisoners? Here is deliverance for the captives. Are you drowned in debt? Here is an all-sufficient surety. Are you dead? Here is the resurrection and the life. Is pollution and filthiness your trouble? Here is a deep and open fountain that runs continually. Art thou weak and unable for duty? Here is covenanted grace and strength, which shall be sufficient for thee. This covenant contains all necessary and suitable supplies for thy wants; so that if God be your God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, your needs shall be richly supplied, according to that promise, *Phil. iv. 19 My God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches, in glory by Christ Jesus.*

III. This covenant relation to God is our greatest happiness, in regard it doth take the terror out of every thing that is terrible to the believer.

1st, This covenant-relation removes all terror from our thoughts of God's holiness and justice. The wicked cannot think of a just and holy God without horror, and therefore, they banish the thoughts of God out of their minds; hence it is said, *Psalm x. 4. God is not in all their thoughts*: for as many thoughts are in their hearts, God is in none of them. But believers may have pleasant and delightful thoughts of God, as their reconciled father in Christ: his holiness is a fountain of grace to them, and his justice the security of their happiness. The covenant-relation takes all terror out of justice, though the most terrible attribute of God unto a sinner, and makes it, that before was an enemy, become a friend, and enter into a strict allegiance with the believer. Before it stood as a flaming sword at the door of paradise, to keep them out: but now it stands as an advocate, pleading for entrance, *1. John i. 9. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* O believer, thy happiness is certain; for justice is come over to thy side, and pleads for thy pardon, because

the debt is paid, and for the crown of glory, seeing the price laid down.

2dly, This covenant-relation takes all *terror* out of afflictions why? It alters the very nature of them to believers, and makes them become good and medicinal to them. *Psal.* cxix. 71. *Ipsa* xxvii. 9. Yea, they are changed into covenanted mercies, *Psal.* lxxxix. 32. *Psal.* cxix. 75. Christ hath shed his blood to purchase sanctified crosses to his people. So believers, whatever trials you meet with, though they be sharp and smarting, you may make such a reflection as this, The Lord sees I want this otherwise I should not be exercised with it: my covenant God knows that this and no less than this is needful for me.

3dly, It takes the *terror* out of the alarming judgments of God, that comes on the wicked and ungodly. When God rises to take vengeance on his enemies, and punish sinful nations with his desolating plagues you may say, These are the mighty arms of my God and King: these things display my Father's power and glory: but in midst of all his children are safe.

4thly, It will take the *terror* out of death: for though death strip you of other comforts, it cannot dissolve your covenant-relation to God. You may sing that swan-song, *Psal.* xiv. 14. *For this God is our God for ever and ever, and he will guide even unto death.* It is this that gives a believer peace at his latter end: it made David triumph in the view of approaching death, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. Death must surely be the king of terrors to an unbeliever; why? It is terrible to think, "I am going to appear before that God I do not know, I have no interest in, nor acquaintance with: how can I expect help from him now, whom I never loved, nor sought unto before. But a covenanted soul may say, "I will not fear, for I know whither I am going, the place I know, and the way I know, and the God of that land I know. Why should I be unwilling to go to my covenanted God and friend, with whom I have had sweet converse, whose presence I have earnestly longed for? Is not death my Father's servant, sent to bring me home to my Father's house, where I will be put in full possession of all the blessings of the covenant? Surely then the day of my death will be better to me than the day of my birth."

5thly, This covenant-relation takes the *terror* out of the great judgment

judgment-day. Why? O believer, it is the day of your covenanted Redeemer's coming to take you home to dwell eternally with him. Doth not a chaste wife long for the return of her husband? and will not a believing soul, betrothed to Christ, long for the glorious bridegroom's return to consummate the happy marriage? Let others tremble at his coming, and cry to the rocks to hide them from the face of the Lamb; but surely you have cause to lift up your heads with joy, for the day of your redemption draweth nigh.

4thly, This covenant-relation to God is our greatest happiness; for it doth exceedingly sweeten every thing that is comfortable. 1. It sweetens the thoughts of Christ to a believer. When the word brings the news of his glory to your ears, or the sacrament sets him forth as crucified before your eyes, your hearts may presently warm to him, and cry with *Thomas, My Lord, and my God!* and with *Paul, It is the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me:* and with the spouse, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* "All he did and suffered was for me; his bloody sweat, his painful wounds, his dying groans were for me. He thought on me, when he was on the cross: my name is this day on his breast plate: he still thinks on me, and p'eads for me, as his covenanted spouse. *I know my Redeemer liveth; and because he lives, I shall live a'fo.*" Good ground have you to say with the *Psalmist* *Psal. civ. 34. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.*

2dly, It will make gospel-ordinances very sweet: as for instance, 1. Prayer may be sweet to a covenanted soul: Is it not sweet to come into God's presence, and call him our Father, and speak to him as such? *Father, grant me this and the other good thing I want.* An uncovenanted soul comes before God as his judge: but, O! it is comfortable to draw nigh to him as our reconciled God and Father in Christ, and with a holy confidence spread our wants before him. 2. It will make the word sweet; a covenanted soul may read, and hear it as a love letter come from his friend and husband, and may sweetly apply the promises of it to himself, and say, *This is mine; this was God's gracious unchangeable purpose to me in Christ: and O, but that would make the word as a lovely song in our ears!* 3. It will make the Lord's supper sweet. O covenanted souls, you can come to this holy table, as to a precious feast provided for you; you can come as

God's friends and invited guests, and expect a kindly welcome from him : It is to you he saith, *Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved, Cant. v. 1.* This is your Father's table covered for you ; many presume thither who have no right ; but you have no ground to question your right, nor doubt your welcome : a communion-day may be a pleasant day to you, and you may rejoice at the intimation and approach of it, and look on it as a foretaste of heaven, and a pledge of your eternal communion with God.

3dly, This covenant-relation will *sweeten* your thoughts of God's works, both of creation and providence. When you walk through the fields, you may say, I walk on my Father's footstool, which he hath given me to sojourn upon while I am here below. When you view the structure of the heavens, you may say, Behold my Father's palace, where he dwells, and where I will dwell with him ere long : if the floor and pavement of it be so glorious, what must its roof, walls, gates and furniture be ? Yet it is my home and dwelling place, prepared by Christ my forerunner. When you consider the dispensation of providence, and God's various dealings towards you, you may say, How great pains is he at with me, to promote my welfare, and prepare me for heaven ? Tho' dispensations be sometimes mysterious now, yet how wise and beautiful will the whole scheme of providence concerning me appear in the issue.

4thly, It will *sweeten* all your outward mercies : why ? you may receive them as love-tokens from heaven, and pledges of God's fatherly good-will to you in Christ. Art thou raised from a sick-bed, or delivered from any trouble ? you may say of it as *Hezekiah* did, *Isa. xxxviii. 17. Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption.* Again, every meal of meat or morsel of bread thou eatest, may be doubly sweet to you for it is the fruits of Christ's purchase ; it is dipt in his blood, and comes through the covenant channel to thy hand : thou mayst spy covenant-love in every common mercy ; thou enjoyest it not as a creature, but as an heir : thy Father sends it from his own table to thee, as an earnest of greater and better things laid up for thee hereafter. That word belongs to thee, which we have in *Eccl. ix. 7. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart : for God now accepteth thy works.*

Lastly,

Lastly, This covenant-relation to God is our greatest happiness, in regard of the sure and indissoluble nature of it. Isaiah lv. 10. Mutable creatures alter their purposes, and break their leagues and covenants which they make; but God will never break his covenant of grace with his people. A covenant with man may be dissolved, as with the people of the Jews, because it is not built on the eternal promise of God, to put his fear in their hearts; but it hath a respect to their obedience. But his covenant with the elect is indissoluble, seeing it depends on God's eternal purpose, to make them persevere in his ways. The covenant of grace doth not run thus, *I will be their God, if they will be my people*; but, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*. He puts a condition indeed in his covenant of grace; but he has resolved and decreed from eternity, to work that condition in their hearts, Jer. xxxii. 40 *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, and do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*. There we see, that God is on both sides in this covenant; he engages not only for his own part, but for ours, that we shall fear him, and shall not depart from him. How happy then are believers who are in covenant with God! They are a happy people; and nothing can deprive them of their happiness. Adultery may dissolve the marriage covenant among men, but not so here; for God saith to his covenanted people, *Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet turn again unto me: Turn ye backsliding children, saith the Lord, I am married unto you*, Jer. iii. 1, 14. Again, death cannot dissolve this covenant-relation, as it doth among men; but brings us the nearer to our covenanted God: so that a covenant-soul, when he finds death begin to assault his clay tabernacle, may even rejoice, and sing with the Psalmist, Psal lxxiii. 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever*. What tho' my eye and heart-strings are ready to break, and the lamp of my life be like a candle burnt to the socket, and near the going out; yet still God is my God, and portion forever. Thus Olevian, a dying faint, comforted himself, *My hearing is gone, my smelling is gone, and my sight is gone: My speech and feeling are almost gone; but the loving kindness of God is still the same, and will never depart from me*.

Application

Application.

Use I. Of Information. We may hence see, 1. How far mistaken the world is about a believer's lot; they many times reckon them poor and despicable, and the off-scouring of all things; but certainly they are, of all persons in the world, the wisest for they make the *wisest* choice, and the best bargain: nay, they are the *richest* too, *for all things are theirs*; tho' they oft seem the world to have nothing, 2 Cor. vi. 10.

2dly, We may hence infer, that believers have no ground to envy the worldling of his portion, but rather to pity him; for he hath no more than what is seen by all, and that but for a short time, Psal. xvii. 14. Luke vi. 24. A carnal man may say, This house, this estate, this money is mine; but a Christian can say, *This God is mine*: and a covenanted God is more than ten thousand kingdoms.

Use II. Of terror, to those that are out of the bond of the covenant: for if the people be so happy, *whose God is the Lord*, how unhappy and miserable must they be, *whose God is not the Lord*: nay, your case is unspeakably sad and dismal; and that God would send a wakening word to all such, and sound alarm in your ears this day.

i. You have neither art nor part in the God of Israel, Eph. ii. 12. He stands in no relation to you, but that of Creator, and so stands he to the devils: but what comfort can they draw from that? for *he that made them, will not have mercy on them, and that formed them, will shew them no favour*.

2dly, You are under a covenant of works, and under its fearful course and sentence for the breach thereof. It is terrible to be under sentence of death by an earthly judge, and to be looking every hour to be taken forth to the scaffold: but your case is far worse; you are doomed to eternal death, and you must be looking every moment to be led forth to execution. When you awake in the morning, you may say, Shall this be the day of my execution? shall I be taken to the scaffold of divine vengeance before night? Every head-ach or sick heart, every pain or stitch in back or breast, may put you to say, Is this the messenger that the judge is to send to bring me forth? Sad is your case, O uncovenanted soul, you may sleep and wake in con-

ual fear; for you are still tottering on the brink of hell, and
edge of destruction. O! tremble then to lie down another
night in this condition, *In the name of God*, I obtest you to a-
wake from sleep, and find no rest for *the sole of our foot*, till, like
Noah's dove, ye come into the ark of the covenant.

Use III. Of *Examination*. O communicants, try if ye be
within this covenant; remember, if you be not, you have no
right to the seals of it, no right to sit down at the Lord's table.
Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat: and examine
yourselves by these marks, 1. Know you any thing of a change
your state? Can you say? "Once I was a bound slave to
Satan, and an enemy of God: Once I loved sin, and hated
holiness; but now God has opened my eyes, and humbled
my heart for sin, and made me cast down the weapons of my
rebellion at his feet: once I was at peace without Christ the
mediator; but now I see nothing but fire and wrath out of
him: Once I thought little of sin; but now I see it to be
the most black and bloody thing in the world:" Then this
is a good sign.

2dly, If you be in covenant with God, you will certainly
love God with your hearts, and love the *Mediator* who brought
you into the covenant. Can you say then with Peter? *Lord,*
thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee. *Lord,*
tho' I cannot hear, pray, praise, or communicate as I ought,
yet thou knowest I love thee; yea, I love thee above all things.
And tho' all the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world
were in my offer or possession, and Christ would say, You must
either part with these, or part with me; my heart would an-
swer, *Lord, abide thou with me, and let them all be gone.*

3dly, These that are in covenant with God, have certainly
made choice of God, as their God and portion. Can you say
you have done this, O doubting communicant? Though you
cannot say, that God hath chosen you, yet doth your heart
truly chuse him? And are you resolved never to be satisfied
without him? and whatever offers be made you, yet you will
be put off with nothing besides God. Then this may give
you comfort.

4thly, Can you say you have made a resignation of yourselves,
and of all you have to God, and you resolve to renew it again
this night in secret, and to-morrow before men and angels?

Then

Then it is a token for good. It may be, doubting soul, thou art fear'd to say, Lord, thou art my God; but canst thou venture to say? *Lord, I am thine, I resolve to be thine, and thine only. I will not be mine own, I will not be the Devil's, I will not be the world's, I will not be my lust's; Lord, I am resolved to be none but thine.* Well, let this comfort you when other marks cannot. For if once you come the length to say, *Lord I am thine* you may say in the next place, *Lord, thou art mine*; for the relation is always reciprocal: and this is the reasoning of the spouse, *Canticles vi. 3. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.*

5thly, Are you mightily pleased with the contrivement and design of this covenant, which is to debase self, and exalt free grace? And would you desire heaven, though it were for no more, but to stand eternal monuments of free grace, and join your note with the redeemed, eternally to cry, *Not unto us, nor unto us, but to thee be the glory?*

And lastly, Are you inclined to perform covenant duties conscientiously, and that in a covenant-way, relying on covenant strength, and from a principle of love and gratitude to your covenanted God, and with an eye to glorify his name? Then fear not to come forward to take the seal of the covenant, for you belong to it.

Use IV. Of *Exhortation*. And this I shall direct to all that hear the gospel, especially communicants. O come take hold of God's covenant, and enter yourselves within the bond of it, and then come and take God's seal to the bargain. I here, in my great Lord and Master's name, make offer of God's covenant to all of you, be what ye will, gospel-slighters, rebels against God, graceless and profane sinners, carnal and earthly minded souls, hypocrites, formalists, backsliders, weary and heavy laden sinners, doubting and discouraged souls, I exhort and beseech you all to come and take hold of God's covenant, make choice of God as your God and portion, and Jesus Christ for your Mediator and Peace-maker with God, and resign yourselves freely to God in Christ. O sinners, the covenant is free, the call is pressing, the offer is great, the bargain excellent.

This is the most honourable and advantageous bargain that ever you made, the design of my whole sermon has been to recommend it, and persuade you to close with it: God know

Now your hearts stand inclined. But I would have you all to remember that our time is short, and the hour is coming, when we that are ministers must leave this work of beseeching, pressing and arguing with you, and go to him that sent us, with a faithful account of the issue of our message. And O how sad and unpleasant will the account be that we must give of these of you whom we leave unpersuaded to take hold of God's covenant? It will be a melancholly thing, and matter of grief, to accuse any of you to the *Father*; but we must do it, if you will not prevent it by your hearkening and obeying. If you do it not in time, as God is in heaven, you will eternally repent it; I do here warn you of your danger, and call heaven and earth to record against you, that I am free of your blood. O young people! what say ye to it? will ye take hold of the covenant? Your baptism will not profit you, unless now when ye are of age ye ratify your parents deed, renew your baptismal engagements, and personally join yourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant. If ye approach to the Lord's table without doing it, you will be unworthy communicants, you will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, you will but mock God and receive your own souls. I have not time to answer objections against covenanting with God; I shall only speak to one question, and then conclude.

Quest. But you may say, What would you have us doing, in order to our being brought into God's covenant? We would gladly be of the number of that happy people, whose God is the Lord, and who are in covenant with him; but we know not how to get into it.

Ans. Surely the soul is not wholly passive in this transaction, but must be active in it. Something is to be done on our part, when we enter into covenant with God; and therefore we are called to *join ourselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant, Jer. 5.* I do not mean that we can do any thing to enter ourselves into covenant with God in our own strength; no, it is God by his spirit that *worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* The duty is ours, but the work is the Spirit's. It is the Spirit that courts the heart, and prevails with the soul to give its consent to the blessed bargain: but, in the mean time, let us be diligent at our duty as we can, looking for the Spirit's concurrence. And there are four things to be done by us, in order

to our being in covenant with God, and God help every communicant to aim at them sincerely this night. 1 *Renunciation*

2. *Acceptation*, 3. *Dedication*. 4. *Solemn engagement*.

1. You must *heartily renounce* and break league with all the Lord's enemies and rivals, *Hof. xiv. 8.* and particularly renounce, 1 *Satan's government*; though formerly you was captive by him at his will, yet now solemnly renounce all subjection to him, and hearken no more to his suggestions and temptations, let God alone have the throne. 2. Renounce the world; be no more a slave to it as you have been; set your heart no longer on its profits and pleasures, as your portion and inheritance; but make God your treasure. 3. Renounce the *flesh*; however its lusts have been beloved by you, let them reign no more in you; but condemn them to be crucified as the murderers of Christ. 4. Renounce *your own righteousness* in point of justification and acceptance with God, and solemnly disclaim all trust or confidence in your own duties and performances.

2dly, *Acceptation*. Heartily aim at to make choice, and accept of God in Christ, as your soul's portion and inheritance *Psal. lxxiii. 25.* But, observe how God is to be chosen, only in and through Christ the Mediator; for *out of Christ he is a consuming fire*; therefore accept of precious Christ as your ground and way to the Father, and of his satisfaction and merits, as ransom for delivering you from wrath. Accept of the *Holy Ghost* as your sanctifier, quickener and comforter; and heartily acquiesce in the covenant of grace, and gospel-method of salvation thro' Christ, as *well ordered in all things*.

3dly, *Dedication*. As God gives himself wholly to you, so you dedicate and give up yourselves, and all that you have wholly and unreservedly to God, *2. Chron. xxx. 8* Give your souls with all their powers and faculties; your bodies, with all their senses and members; and all your enjoyments temporal and spiritual, to be employed for God and his honour, and be intirely disposed of for his service and glory.

4thly, *Solemn engagement*. You must resolve and engage to the *strength of Christ your Surety*, to live wholly to your covenant God, and walk with him in newness of life, perform every duty he commands, suffer patiently what he inflicts, war against every sin he forbids, and manfully fight against his enemies. Thus be aiming at *your duty*, and lay yourselves in

Sp

Spirit's way, and who knows but God will pity and help you, honestly to take hold of his covenant, and also himself say *Amen* to the bargain. The Lord bless his word. *Amen.*

S E R M O N III.

A Preparation Sermon, Before the COMMUNION.

The right Improvement of the Day of Grace.

H E B R E W S iii. 7, 8.

Therefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, &c.

IN this chapter, the apostle doth display something of the Mediator's glory and excellency; he shews, that he is far more preferable to *Moses*, as much as the builder of the house is greater than the house; and that he alone is the eternal Son of God, the great Prophet, and teacher of his church. And having laid down several propositions to this purpose, he comes to draw an inference from them in the words of my text, *Wherefore, &c.* as if he had said, Seing Christ is the chief apostle and prophet of his church, a teacher sent from God to instruct the world; it is therefore our indispensable duty to hear his voice, comply with his counsels, and that without delay; and this exhortation the apostle strengthens with that of *David Psal. xcv. 7.*

In the words we have, 1st, The illative particle, *wherefore*, which denotes the deduction of the ensuing exhortation from the preceeding discourse. 2^{dly}, We have the authority which the apostle cites for his exhortation, even that of the Holy Ghost, who of old spake by *David, Psal. xcv.* and now speaketh by him in the text. 3^{dly}, In the exhortation, we have a duty required of us, *viz.* Hearing of Christ's voice, *Hear his voice*; not

the voice of a mere man, not the voice of an apostle or angel, but of the eternal Son of God, that glorious ambassador of heaven who was sent to the world for advancing a treaty of peace; his voice we are to hear, his instructions and calls we are to comply with.—— 4thly, We have the circumstance of time, and special season when this duty is to be done, and that is presently, *to day*, or in this solemn day of grace.—— 5thly, We have, in the following verse, a cautionary direction to all that sit under the gospel, to beware of hardening their hearts, or stopping their ears against Christ's calls, as the obstinate and hard hearted *Jews* did in the wilderness.

DOCTRINE. 1. *That the consideration of the authority of the Holy Ghost speaking in the scriptures, should mightily enforce upon us the duties there exhorted.* We should consider whose authority we despise, when we slight the offers, calls, and duties presented in the gospel, even that of the *Holy Ghost*; and it is a fearful thing to sin against the *Holy Ghost*.

Doct. 2. *That the voice which we are called to hear in and by the gospel, it is Christ's voice; it is not the voice of a man like ourselves, but the voice of the Son of God, and therefore should be carefully regarded.* But the doctrine which I intend to handle at this time, shall be drawn chiefly from the season of pressing this duty

Doct. 3. *That all who sit under the gospel, should be careful to improve the seasons of grace, and opportunities of hearing Christ's voice, which God allows them.*

In handling this doctrine, I shall shew,

1. What is implied in hearing of Christ's voice in the gospel
2. That there are some special seasons for hearing of Christ's voice, and what these are.
3. How we ought to improve these seasons.
4. Reasons why we should carefully improve them.
5. I shall apply the whole.

As to the *first*, What is imported in hearing of Christ's voice in the gospel. I shall not insist on what is presupposed in it, *viz.* That our ears are naturally stopped against Christ; and it is only a work of his power on the soul that can open them: but I shall shew what it directly implies.

1st. This *hearing* doth import, our believing the word to be Christ's voice, and not the voice of man. As long as we regard what we hear, only as the voice of a minister, or man like ourselves, it will never humble us, nor prevail with our stubborn hearts; but when we begin to take it up as the voice of God, Christ speaking to us from heaven, then the soul doth hear, and consider, and obey. Till Samuel knew that it was the Lord's voice speaking to him, 1. Sam. i he still took the wrong course; he went to Eli, when he should have harkened to God.

2dly, A close and serious attention of the mind to what we hear. The soul that hears Christ's voice, stops his career in pursuing sin and the world, which always makes a buzzing noise about his ears; and applies his ear to hear what Christ saith: turns attentive to, and serious about the things of eternity.

3dly, The application of what Christ saith unto us in particular: as if Christ spoke to us by name and surname, and said unto us, as Nathan did to David, *Thou art the man*. We commonly neglect what Christ saith by his word, by putting it by ourselves to others; but we hear him aright, when we bring what he saith close home to our own hearts and consciences, and say, It is to me this word is directed; it is me that Christ intends; it is I that the law condemns, and that justice threatens. I am the guilty sinner that have shut out Christ, and preferred my lusts to him, and yet he now pities me, and calls me to open to him."

4thly, A thorough conviction of the necessity and advantage of yielding to Christ's calls; O! saith the soul, long hath my Saviour knocked, saying, *Open to me, arise and come away*, and yet I have sit still, and given him a deaf ear; but now I see, I am undone and condemned in my present case; if death knock before I open to Christ, I can look for nothing but the bottomless pit to open and swallow me up forever. But if I open to Christ, I am happy, and out of the reach of wrath forever.

5thly, It imports, the soul's cordial complying with Christ's calls, and consenting to receive and embrace him, as he is offered in the gospel; that is to say, as a *Prophet* to teach us, a *Saviour* to atone for us, and a *King* to rule us. The man that hears

hears Christ's voice, goes in heartily with the gospel method of salvation, acquiesces in that noble contrivance of grace, is content to be justified by Christ's righteousness, to be taught in Christ's school, and governed by his laws.

II. The second thing to be discoursed is, that *there are special seasons for hearing Christ's voice, that should be carefully improven; and what these are.* There are some advantageous opportune seasons of grace, wherein God is ready to receive and entertain us, which are called in scripture, *an accepted time, a day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. *an accepted time*, i. e. a time pleasing to God. *A day of salvation*, i. e. a day wherein improvers of it may get salvation begun in pardoning and satisfying grace; and eternal salvation compleated in heaven made sure to them. Now such times and seasons should be carefully managed, that they be not lost, as alas they are to many. I mention some of these seasons.

I. The *present time*, when you have gospel-ordinances, health and strength to attend them: that is a season carefully to be improven; and hence the *Spirit of God* saith so frequently no less than three times in this 3d chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *To day, to-day, to day.* God cries to you, *To-day hear my voice*; but Satan says to you, *To-morrow* is time enough. But surely, God's season is the best. O sinner! To-day thou art in health, to-morrow thou may'st be in sickness: To-day thou art living, to-morrow thou may'st be dying: To-day thou art on earth, to-morrow thou may'st be in hell: To-day Christ is smiling and inviting you to come unto him; but to-morrow he may be frowning, and sentencing you to depart from him never to return again. And should not the present time, when you enjoy ordinances, and health to attend them, be improved?

II. The *time of youth* is a special season of grace, Eccles. xii. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; O young man, this is an accepted time, and a day of salvation: it is a most advantageous opportunity for hearkening to Christ's voice; for now the heart is more tender, and the will more pliable afterwards. Now the heart is sooner affected and melted with sin, than afterwards; for old age turns stiff and inflexible. The branches of a young tree will bow, and train up any way, when old they will not ply. 2dly, Now you have not such

burden the conscience, harden the heart, and hinder you from coming to Christ, as you will have afterwards. *3dly*, Now your minds and thoughts are more free of all cares and anxieties than they will be afterwards; and so more fit for closing and transacting with Christ in the gospel. *4thly*, It is a season that God especially regards. Under the law, He required the first-fruits as his portion, and would have all the sacrifices that were offered to him, to be young, and in their strength. *Exod. xxiii. 19. Lev. ii. 14.* And still he loves the season of youth, and remembers the kindness of youth long afterwards, *Ecclef. xii. 1. Jer. ii. 2, 3.* The mourning, praying and fasting of young folk, is the most melodious music in God's ears: wherefore, let the precious season of youth be diligently improved. Are there not some young communicants here? O! improve this day of salvation, a time of youth is the most usual season of conversion, and acquaintance with Christ. If you look through the land, among the people of God, you will perhaps find scarce one of a hundred, but will date his conversion, and his closing with Christ from the time of youth. If a tree do not bud or blossom, when young, it is a sign that it is barren, and will not bear at all afterwards. O then! now in the days of youth lay a sure foundation stone; take heed to your first communicating; strive for heart sincerity in hearing Christ's voice, and closing with the gospel offer, and covenanting with God.

III. A season when people enjoy *plenty and purity* of gospel ordinances with peace and safety, ought carefully to be improved. And now you have such a season, you have plenty of ministers, plenty of sermons, sacraments, solemn calls, free offers, faithful warnings, earnest intreaties, and powerful persuasions, and none to make you afraid. It is prophesied of the gospel times, *Psal. lxxiii. 11.* That *the Lord shall give the word, and great shall be the company of them that publish it.* Now you have many faithful labourers; in every parish you have such as publish the word, and preach the glad tidings of reconciliation: many a time have you Christ crucified set forth before your eyes in the Lord's supper; and again, the Lord is to give you in this place a new occasion for it. These are precious seasons, which our fathers, sometimes would have prized at a high rate; when they were put to seek their spiritual bread with the peril of their lives, *as of the sword in the wilderness.* The Lord hath made his arm

arm bare in behalf of the gospel: he hath disabled its enemies, settled the ark in its place, and still continues plenty of purges and ordinances, maugre all the contrivances and attempts of enemies to frustrate their oppression. O! for hearts to value and improve such precious opportunities.

IV. A time when God gives a people *providential warnings* to waken and excite them to attend his word and ordinances, and the season to be improved. God hath oft threatened us with the bloody sword; and now he is threatening us with the approaching of the pestilence; that wasting stroke that lays heaps upon heaps, makes death to ride in triumph through the streets. Many warnings of approaching judgments have we formerly misimproved; and therefore, God may come upon us unawares, and surprize us with his judgments without warning. Well, when God is taking pains on us, and giving us warning at a distance, let us improve the season by hearkening to Christ's voice in the gospel. *Let us be moved with fear, (like Noah) and provide for the saving of our souls, before the flood of wrath approach.* Nay, blessed be God, the ark is prepared to our hand, and there is a window opened in the side thereof for our entrance; Let us take the wings of faith, and flie thither without delay.

V. A time when the *inward workings of the Spirit* on the conscience, concur with the external dispensation of the word and sacraments, is a special season to be improved. It is that time that a *great and effectual door* is opened both to ministers and people. Paul had this door opened to him at Ephesus, among many adversaries, 1 Cor. xvi. 9. Oh! if it were so with us! we needed not fear all that adversaries can do against the gospel. But we have it to regret, that though God hath outwardly restrained adversaries, yet a *great and effectual door* is not opened to us: still the door is strait both for ministers and people: God's Spirit is greatly restrained in our day. If it be asked, When is that a wide or effectual door is opened? *Ans.* It is only when the Spirit of God is poured out in a plentiful way, both upon ministers and people. When God's Spirit was thus poured out after Christ's ascension, then both the graces and the gifts of the Spirit were communicated in a plentiful measure. Then the ministers had great light of knowledge and understanding as well as the heat of zeal and love. It was easy for them to study and preach, they had clear uptakings of the matters of God.

and a great readiness and liberty of expression, Their hearts were enlarged, their minds enlightened, their memories were strengthened, and they had a *door of utterance* opened, *i. e.* A great facility in declaring of their minds; they were no way straitened for proper matter or fit words; their hearts *indited* goodly things, and their tongues were *as the pen of a ready writer*. Thus it is still, when the Spirit of God is remarkably poured out. Then the preaching of the gospel is both pleasant and powerful; ministers hearts are warmed, and peoples hearts are melted; ministers mouths are opened, and peoples appetites enlarged. There is such a thing as the Spirit of God, striving with the hearts and consciences of hearers, in and by the word. Gen. vi. 3. And when he thus strives, it makes an effectual door, and a special season of salvation. When the Spirit moves the waters of the sanctuary, people should not neglect then to step in, and be healed. Take heed you do not fight the strivings of God's Spirit with you, in any measure, lest you provoke God to pass such a dreadful sentence against you, as that, Gen. vi. 3. *My Spirit shall no longer strive with you*. And if you lose the precious season of the Spirit's striving, you perhaps will never recover it again.

Ques. When is it that the Spirit of God strives with sinners, and by the gospel?

Ans. 1. When he opens the eyes, and gives the man a discovery of his sinful and miserable state by nature, and of the evil, sinfulness, and danger of his sins; and so rivets and fastens conviction on the hearts and conscience, that the arrows of the threatenings do stick, and the man is brought to thoughtfulness and anxiety about his future state; and hence is made to cry, *What shall I do to be saved?* O! That is a season which ought to be carefully improved.

2dly, The Spirit strives, by making a man wholly dissatisfied with his present state, and all his earthly enjoyments, as long as he is in the dark about his soul's salvation. Though he may be in outward prosperity, he says, *All these things avail me nothing*, while I am ready to be swallowed up by the wrath of God for sin; surely there is no living, no abiding in this state I am in. I am shut up in the prison of unbelief, and the house is all on fire about my ears. I must break prison, and make my escape, otherwise I am undone for ever.

3dly, By making the man despair of help and deliverance by any thing in himself. Oh! saith he, I am a poor, miserable, helpless creature! Neither my doing, nor suffering, can free me from wrath. I know no course, nor contrivance of my own that can relieve me. My relief must certainly come from another airth; for I can never work it for myself.

4thly, By humbling the man, to the dust, for sin: particularly for mispending time, neglecting prayer, misimproving sermons, profaning Sabbaths and Sacraments, &c. O! saith he, is there any creature more vile than I? Surely there is no more loathsome, no carion more offensive, no puddle more unclean than my soul before God. Can ever the arms of mercy open to embrace such a monster of sin as I have been? This is choice season, which should be well improved.

5thly, By giving some light into the understanding, concerning the remedy provided for lost sinners. The soul begins, by the word, to discover something of the fulness and ability of Christ, as a Saviour; so that it is made to think, there is hope in Israel, concerning this matter: my case, says the sinner, is not so bad as the devils, for whom no remedy was ever provided.

6thly, By working some purposes and inclinations in the will towards the offered remedy; so that the soul makes its aims towards Christ: yea, is content to take any course for an interest in him. And therefore says oft with Paul, Acts ix. 6. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What method shall I take to be saved? What shall I do to be saved? What shall I do to be saved? What shall I do to be saved?*

7thly, By determining the soul to a conscientious and diligent use of the means, for getting Christ, and salvation through him.

8thly, By making a stir and commotion among the affections, and exciting earnest and passionate desires after Christ and salvation thro' him: so that the soul is made to say, *O that I knew where I might find him! O! when wilt thou come unto me? I will spare no pains to get a meeting with him; I will seek him thro' the streets and broad ways, and all the lanes of the city, crying, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

Now when the Spirit strives with any of you, in any measure it is a precious season of grace, that should be carefully observed and improved.

III. The third thing in my general method is to shew, how these seasons of grace ought to be improved by us. 1. By highly valuing and admiring the distinguishing goodness of God, in affording us such days of grace and salvation. He deals not so with other nations, Jews, Pagans, Mahometans, and Papists, have not the gospel light, and offers of grace which you have. Be thankful to God, especially you that have more special and remarkable seasons beyond others: you that have health and strength, and youth on your side; you that have the Spirit of God striving with you in the ordinances, your eyes opened, hearts melted, consciences awakened, affections moved; O bless God for his distinguishing mercies.

2dly, By believing firmly what Christ saith to you by the word, and attending carefully to it. Why? It is the word of the living God, more true, certain and immoveable than the foundations of the earth; nay, heaven and earth both will sooner pass away, than one jot or one tittle of his word fall to the ground. Let your ears then be stopped against all the calls and solicitations of sin, Satan, and the world; and open only to precious Christ, saying with the Psalmist, *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.*

3dly, By applying closely to yourselves what Christ saith, and meditating on it afterwards. When you hear any sin threatened you are guilty of, or any duty pressed, that you neglect; bring that word close home to your hearts, and say, This word is to me, let me not forget it. O let it abide with me when I go home, when I eat and drink, when I lie down and rise up, when I go out and come in. Still think, you hear Christ's word founding in your ears, and that you hear him crying, *Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee the light.* Open the door of thy heart, and let me in. *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.* Why do you weary my patience, and let me stand so long neglected, till my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night?

4thly, By labouring to give kindly entertainment to the word, and the motions of Christ's Spirit on thy soul, presently striking in with convictions, submitting to reproofs, and hearkening to his counsels, saying with Samuel, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Say not to the Spirit's motions and strivings

with thee, as Felix did to Paul, *Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.* No, no; but forthwith give ear, yield and comply with the Spirit's strivings and Christ's voice: be content immediately to have thy forelaunched, and thy wounds searched to the bottom; and when conviction and soul-trouble for sin is begun, go not to stifle or quench it, or seek hastily to pluck God's arrows out of thy conscience; but cherish and entertain the work of God's Spirit by meditating on thy sin, considering thy lost estate by nature, thy insufficiency to help thyself, together with the excellency and suitableness of the remedy which God has provided.

5thly. By frequent and fervent application to the throne of grace, begging for Christ's sake, that God may both begin and finish his work in the soul. Acknowledge that you are able of yourselves to do nothing, and that it is by his grace only you can be saved; and when he begins by conviction, be thankful to him, and intreat, that these sparks kindled by the breath of God, may not be smothered, but blown up into a flame: and still remember that the work is God's, though it be your duty to be casting on fuel by prayer and meditation; yet the sparks that kindle the fire come from God's altar; the breath that blows it comes from heaven. Pray therefore, that the fire may come down, even a live-coal from the altar, and that heaven's wind may blow on thy soul. Cry with the spouse, *Awake, O north-wind, and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.* Let the north-winds of the law come, and convince, and awaken; and the south-winds of the gospel come, and refresh, and comfort. Be earnest, O convicted sinner, in deprecating God's taking away his Spirit from you; make it a part of your daily prayer, to cry with the Psalmist, Psal. li 11. *Lord, take not thy holy Spirit from me.* Lord forbid the new creature be stifled in the womb. O do thou quicken and preserve it. Let these convictions terminate in my conversion here, and salvation hereafter. Lord! thou art a rock, thy work is perfect; hast thou begun, and wilt thou not also make an end? O! suffer not these tender fruits to be nipped in the bud, or blasted in the blossom, either by Satan's frost-winds, or the world's chilling blasts: but, O! preserve them to maturity, to the praise and glory of thy grace.

IV. The next thing is, the reasons of the *doctrine*; why we should so carefully improve our seasons of grace.

I. Because God looks for it; and expects it at their hand. When God plants trees in his vineyard, waters and takes pains in them, he looks for fruit from them, *Luke xiii.* We see what the Lord says of *Judah Isa. v. 1, 2.* *My welbeloved (i. e. Christ) hath a vineyard (i. e. the church of the Jews) in a very fruitful hill: (i. e. a good soil, furnished with every possible means to make it fruitful) And he fenced it, (i. e. protected it by his providence, from the incursion of enemies) he gathered out the thorns thereof, (i. e. removed out of it whatever was noxious or hurtful, perhaps the idol-gods, put these out of the land) he planted it with the choicest vine: (i. e. with pure ordinances, and institutions of worship, good government and discipline) he built a tower in the midst of it; (i. e. for its defence, viz. the strong city of Jerusalem in midst of the land, which was built as a city compact together, whither the tribes went up for worship) also he made a wine-press therein (i. e. the temple and altar continually running with the blood of the sacrifices). Now after this it is said, *He looked that it should bring forth grapes*, which doth not import that God was uncertain of the event; but demonstrates what is just and equal, and what in such cases ought to be expected. Surely a vineyard, so attended and furnished, ought to bring forth fruit, answerable to all the acts of God's care and providence towards it.*

And to bring the matter home to our case, God hath been at special care to plant a vineyard in this land: We have a good soil, well fenced, the stones gathered out, idolatry and superstition removed, a choice vine planted, pure ordinances set up, enemies disabled that laid it waste. God has built towers, and made wine-presses, viz. the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, where the blood of Christ, our great sacrifice, doth run plentifully to us, for pardon, healing and washing. Now, doth God look for grapes? Is it not just that we should bring forth fruit, answerable to all these privileges? Alas! for the most part, there is nothing but wild grapes with us; little suitable fruit of our solemn communion-days. You may see, what the result of frustrating the divine expectations, *Isa. v. 5. 6.* is, nothing but blasting, withering, ruin and desolation.

Therefore, Because of the shortness and uncertainty of the season of

of grace : none can tell how long it will last. You cannot promise it will continue as long as your lives, (tho' even these most uncertain) no ; your special season and day of grace may end this very day, or at this communion occasion, though you should happen to live many years after this. It is likely, God is laying to some hearing me, *To day hearken to my voice, repent and cloze with Christ my Son, or be henceforth hardened and undid for ever.* O sinner, this night thy day of grace may cease. God may this day cause some of your hearts to warm by his word, others to tremble, others to mourn, others to purpose and resolve. Well, if you do not lay hold on, and improve this season, and hearken to Christ's voice, you may never get a like occasion again ; nay, even though you should wish for it, Christ saith, *Luke xvii. 22. The time shall come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and shall not see it.* This may be *one of the days of the Son of man* to you ; for now Christ is offering himself, and pressing salvation on you, and striving by his Spirit (I hope) with some of you. Well, if you neglect to open your hearts to Christ this day, God may seal on them to morrow, that they shall never be opened. You may afterwards desire another of such days as this ; you may wish for one of the offers of that Saviour, for one drop of that blood you slighted, for one knock of his Spirit at the door of your heart, which formerly you neglected ; for one of his motions or strivings with you ; and yet it never be granted. With some the day of grace is longer, with others shorter ; with some it ends in childhood, with others it ends in youth ; and with some few it lasts to old age : but, O sinner ! thou hast no reason to expect the continuance of it a moment after this day.

3dly, Because if you do not improve your day of grace, you lose your souls. You may compare the text with *verse 11* of the chapter ; *Because they hardened their hearts, and would not hear his voice,* in their day of grace, it is subjoined, *I swear by my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest.* We see the sad case *Jerusalem* was in, when they lost their day of grace. *Luke xix. 41, 42. When he was near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes.* Here it is said, *Christ wept,* which (original *se*) denotes a weeping with lamentation. *He wept bitterly*

let you all know what a sad and deplorable thing it is, for a people, city or person to lose their day of grace. The words he speaks are uttered in a weeping strain. Abrupt expressions come now and then from his mouth; he drops now a word, and then a tear; he would speak, but his weeping stops his voice, *If thou hadst known, even thou.* *Thou* is reduplicate, or twice exprest, *Thou, even thou.* As if he had said, Thou ancient city, the city of *David*, thou seat of the temple, and of the sacrifices; *O if thou hadst known!* Then he adds, *at least in this day.* They had enjoyed many lesser days of grace, when they had faithful prophets dealing with them; these they persecuted and despised, and so lost these days: but these were but lesser days, which did not finally determine the state of that city; for they were to have another day, which is here called, *their day*, i. e. the day wherein the Son of God was to come among them, and preach the gospel to them, *three years and an half*: that was a special day of grace, and the day that determined their state; for since they did not improve it, *the things of their peace were hid from their eyes.* God would deal more with them, but left them to destruction. O sinners! O communicants! so will it fare with you, if you let your day of grace go over: night will come on, wherein none can work; you will stumble in the dark, and fall headlong into the pit ever.

Worthily, Because God keeps a strict account of every hour and minute of your day of grace, that you trifle away; for he reckons it very precious, whatever you think of it. When God lights the candle of the gospel, he expects you should work by it, and he will not suffer this precious candle to burn without observation; nay, he counts every hour and minute it burns, and every hour and minute his Spirit strives, and will make you reckon them at last. God takes not such strict notice of times of weakness and ignorance; for it is said, he *winks* at sinners living under them, *Acts xvii. 30.* i. e. he doth not so narrowly look their diligence; but when he sends times of light, and of his Spirit's striving with sinners, he will not wink at one hour or minute, but exactly set down every sermon you hear, every communion you see, every call, every intreaty, every threatening, every reproof, every conviction and warning you get, whether by ordinances or providences, whether by conscience or by his

his Spirit. And O! what a dreadful libel will these make against you at the great day, if you neglect your day of grace.

V. The Application.

Use I. for *Information*. We may hence see, that it is not bare enjoyment of the gospel, and communion seasons that make us happy, but the right improvement of the day of grace which we enjoy therein.

Use II. For *Lamentation*. We may hence take occasion to bewail the sad case of many that neglect and lose the day of the merciful visitation. It is said, Jer. viii. 7. *The stork knoweth appointed times, the turtle, the crane and the swallow observe time of their coming, &c.* And we are bid go learn of the Prov. vi 6. *that provides her meat in summer, and gathers food in harvest, while the weather is good and dry, and food may be had:* so that we see the brutes and silly insects observe their seasons. But, alas! many men neglect and forget theirs; they let their summer and harvest days pass, without making any provision for eternity. O! how many among us may take up to sad lamentation, Jer. viii 20. *Our harvest is past, our summer is ended, and we are not saved!* O that we could weep over many as Christ did over Jerusalem, for losing their day of grace!

Quest. Who are these that thus lose their day of grace?

Ans. It is hard to be very particular on this head; I can only give some general characters of such persons. 1. Those who have sit many years under pure and powerful ordinances and were never affected thereby; but still remain dead and hardened under the most awakening calls and plainest reproofs. These seem to be given over to ruin, Prov xxix. 1. *He that is often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy.*

2dly, Those who have had many secret motions and operations of the Spirit on their souls, to no effect; many purposes of resolutions to good, and all vanished; many of the Spirit's revivings, and all resisted: these are likely to be given over. Eccl. xxiv. 13. *Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purified, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.* When God's Spirit offers to cleanse that people from their sin, they, like Lot's wife, still lingered after it, and would not part therewith.

3dly, These who have greatly grieved the Spirit of God, by venturing on sin against the light of their consciences, and the Spirit's motions, and so are turned wilful and resolute in sinning; such have the symptoms of rejection. *Hosea iv. 17. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.*

4thly, These who are so forward and bent upon a sinful course, that they can endure no reproof or controul therein, but hate them in their hearts, who seek to reclaim them: these have the symptoms of ruin upon them, *Proverbs xv. 10 Amos 10.*

5thly, When persons are so far hardened in sin, that God saith to be a reprover to them, and strikes their consciences dumb and senseless, that they do not accuse nor challenge them: it is a sad sign of upgiving, *Ezek iii. 26 Hosea iv. 17.*

6thly, When repentance is hid from people's eyes, so that they are not affected with the view of their sins, when they are hid before them; no dispensation of providence, no token of God's anger, neither judgments nor mercies, rods nor threatenings; nay the flames of hell flashed in the sinner's face, do not breed any remorse in their consciences, nor relenting in their hearts for sin: when people arrive at this height, it is a sad sign that they are given up to wrath, *Isa. xlii. 25. Jer. v. 3.*

III. Next use shall be of *Examination*. O try, if ye have improved your day of grace, so as to harken to Christ's voice, and comply with his gracious offers. O communicants, it is highly your interest to know this, that you may come with chearfulness and feast with your Redeemer at his table. Now try it by these marks.

1st Had you ever the experience of Christ's Spirit's work, opening your ear, and inclining your hearts to close with his offers in the gospel? Do you experimentally know the heinousness and multitude of your sins? Do you know something of the terribleness of God's wrath due to you for these sins? Have you seen your soul's need of Christ, as a man pursued for his life seeth his need of a city of refuge? Have you seen yourselves lost and dead men, if you get not into Christ? Have you felt ardent desires after Christ, and been made to say, *Give us Christ, or else we die?* Have you been content to take this freely Saviour on any terms, to part with all for this *pearl of price*, and to count all but *loss and dung* to be found in him?

2dly, Can you say, that Christ's word and ordinances when you first heard his voice speaking to you, are still precious and lovely to you for his sake? and hence you are made sometimes to cry out with the Psalmist, *Psal lxxxiv 1, 2. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.* Sweet sermons, sweet communion days, lovely occasions, when the bridegroom's voice is to be heard.

3dly, Are you filled with low thoughts of yourselves, and with your own doings and performances, and with high thoughts of Christ and his righteousness? And do ye turn out all Christ's rivals out of your hearts, and undervalue the world and all things in it besides him, who is *the chiefest among ten thousand, and fairer than the sons of men.*

4thly, Do you find a great alteration, and gracious change in your souls, since the time you heard his voice? Doth Christ work as a refiner with you, changing both heart and life to the better? Are *old things past away*, old lusts, old thoughts, old desires, old customs, old ways? And are all things with you become new? You that formerly set light by Christ and his voice, and admired the world and its flattering pleasures, and said of Christ, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved?* Do you now value him, seek nearness to him in duties, enquire for him in ordinances, yea meditate on him in the night watches, and when you awake do you find your hearts with him? And is sin that displeaseth him your greatest terror? Then surely you are among that blest company that have heard your Redeemer's voice in your day of grace, and you may come with joy to his table.

IV Use of *Exhortation*. And here I exhort you all in the name of Christ, to improve your season of grace. *To-day, when it is called to-day, O hear his voice;* and to morrow when he invites. *O come unto his table.* Hearers of the gospel, *this is now the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.* What do you resolve to do? Christ is now come to cry and lift up his voice to this whole congregation, to try you once more if ye will hear his voice, before your day of grace end. Well, his voice is to you all. I know none of you excluded, if you do not exclude yourselves.

1st. O carnal earthly minded soul, that has been a drudge to the world, and a stranger to Christ all thy days, his voice is

you this day : O come hear his voice, and close a bargain with him, it will be the best bargain ever you made.

2dly, O *profane* sinner, drunkard, swearer, liar, Sabbath-breaker, whoremonger, sinner as black as hell, hearken to Christ's voice this day, and come and be saved from thy sins; why will you stop your ears, and chuse to die in your sins?

3dly, O *hard-hearted* sinner, that never wast affected all thy life for the sinfulness and misery of thy natural estate that never had a sore heart for offending God, that never mourned for one sin, Christ's voice is this day to thee, *Isa. xlv. 12 Hearken unto me, ye stout hearted. that are far from righteousness*

4thly, O *prayerless* sinner, that never bowed a knee in secret, cry for pardon of sin, and an interest in Jesus Christ, to save thee from the wrath to come, lend your ear this day, and hearken to Christ's sweet voice, while he calls *Seek the Lord while he may be found call ye upon him while he is near. Isa. lv. 6.*

5thly, *Condemned rebels* in the hands of justice, sentenced to death, and ready to be taken out to execution; O hear Christ's voice this day, and your souls shall live

6thly, *Slaves* to sin and Satan, who have many time heard the devil's voice, answered his calls, and complied readily with his temptations; will you hear the Redeemer's voice for once, and comply with his counsels before it be too late. Why will you shut your ear against the lovely Saviour, and obey the voice of your soul destroyer?

7thly, *Obstinate* sinner, that could never hitherto, either by the word or the rod, by ministers or providences, be prevailed on to leave one of all thy sins, O be persuaded to hear Christ's voice this day, and no longer harden thy heart.

8thly, O *gospel sifter*, that has many a day refused Christ's offers, spurned against his bowels, trampled on his blood, crucified him at the communion table: O come, hearken this day to his voice, and he will let you see, that tho' your case be sad, it is not desperate; for *he hath found a ransom.*

9thly, *Hypocrites* and *formalists*, that have had a mask of religion, but have all your days been dissembling and dealing deceitfully with God; come deal ingenuously and sincerely with God for once, and hearken to his voice, give him your hearts, as well as your outward man.

10thly, *Backsliders* and *covenant-breakers*, who have broke

many a vow, slighted many an engagement, and sinned against many a resolution; O hear Christ's voice this day, when he calls to you, *Turn ye backsliding children, come to me, and I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely.*

11thly, *Poor plagued diseased souls*, who are groaning under many heart-plagues and soul-distresses, such as atheism, pride, hardness, formality, &c. come hearken to Christ's voice, and he will be your physician.

12thly, *Weary and heavy laden sinners*, who are like to sink with the burden of your guilt, come hearken to Christ's voice this day, and *he will give rest to your souls.*

13thly *Pursued shelterless sinners*, who are afraid of the venger of blood, hearken to Christ's voice, and flee to the city of refuge. Many motives and arguments might I use with you to hear the voice of *lovely Jesus*, while he calls to-day.

1st, Consider how earnest Christ is to persuade you to hear his voice; he stands at your door, and knocks both by word and Spirit; yea he waits and knocks after many repulses and affronts, and promises that all former slights and refusals shall be forgiven, if you will yet hearken and close with him. How oft doth he repeat his intreaties, *Luke xiii. 34. How would I have gathered you!* Yea, he weeps for sinners obstinate, *Luke xix. 41.* Strange! Doth he gain any thing by your hearkening to his voice? What means this earnestness? In all, O sinners, on your account. For, 1. He knows better than any the worth of your souls, and that a world cannot redeem them when lost. 2. He knows well the miserable state of your souls without him; it is most sad and deplorable at present, and will be much more so through endless eternity: for if you hearken not Christ's voice, you will die in your sins, and be tormented in them for ever. 3. Christ is so earnest, because he knows the difficulty of winning souls. He knows that Satan has great power and interest with souls, to blind, harden, and delude them, and it is not easy to undeceive them, and pull them out of his grips: and therefore he deals and strives so earnestly with you to gain them.

2dly, Take a serious view of the state of your souls: would you stop your ears against Christ's charming voice; it is infinitely miserable. For, 1st, Your souls are destitute of that is good, *Eph. ii. 12.* You are as poor and wretched

as ever God made; you are without life, without grace, without peace, without, pardon, without comfort, without righteousness, without ransom, without the favour of God, without the image of God, without the Spirit of God, and without happiness. 2dly, Your souls are in the possession of Satan, where Christ is shut out, the devil is let in; and where he dwells there he hath an absolute dominion: he uses all the faculties of the soul as his tools and instruments, Eph ii. 2. Oh! would not any man reckon it an unspeakable misery, to be in a house shut up with the devil? 3dly, Where Christ is shut out, the plague of sin doth rage, and its pestilential marks do daily appear; what madness is it then to refuse to hearken to the voice of this blessed cleanser? 4thly, The fire of God's wrath is kindled there, where Christ is refused; and what distraction is it to shut out Christ, whose blood only can quench this fire? 5thly, If you do not hearken to Christ, you have no way to prevent eternal destruction; for there is no advocate, no surety to interpose for you, if he be refused. Surely, the thoughts of appearing before an angry God after death, must be terrible to a Christless soul; *for who can dwell with devouring fire? who can abide with everlasting burnings?* I have read of a certain king of Hungary who was a Christian; and being on a time marvellous sad and heavy, his brother, who was a brisk and gallant man, would needs know what ailed him. "Oh brother, (saith he) I have been a great sinner against God, and I know not how I shall appear before him, when he comes to judgment." His brother answered, *These are but melancholly thoughts*, and so made light of them, as courtiers use to do. The king replied nothing at that time; but the custom of that country was, (the government being absolute) that if the executioner sounded a trumpet before any man's door, the man was presently to be led to execution. The king, in the dead time of night, sent his executioner, and caused him sound his trumpet before his brother's door, who hearing and seeing the messenger of death, ran quickly and sprang in trembling into his brother's presence, falls down on his knees, and beseeches the king to let him know wherein he had offended him. "O brother, (answered the king) you never offended me, but loved me: And, (said he) is the sight of an earthly executioner so terrible to thee; and shall not I, who am so great a sinner, fear much more to be
"brought

“brought to the judgment-seat of an angry God?” W
soul can think on this without terror, that hath not hearkened
to Christ’s voice in the gospel.

III. If you do not hearken to Christ’s voice in the gospel
had been better for you never to have heard the gospel at
for your guilt is dreadfully aggravated hereby, and your misery
will be the greater, both here and hereafter. We may gather
this from Rev. vi. where after the *white horse* (i. e. Christ who
the gospel neglected) comes the *red horse* of war, the *black horse*
of famine, and the *pale horse* of pestilence. Neglecting to hear
Christ in the gospel, ushers in all outward miseries like a flood.
*Jer. vi. 8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart
from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* Then
gain, how sad will your case be at a tribunal, and through
eternity? The devils, the Turks, the Heathens, and your own
consciences, will bitterly upbraid you in hell, for refusing
to hear Christ’s voice in the gospel.

IV. Christ will not hear your cries in the time of misery
you neglect his voice in the time of mercy, Prov. i. 24, 25.
Now Christ’s voice is sweet, and full of mercy, but remember
O gospel flighters, the time is at hand, when you will hear
Christ speaking in another tune; no more *open to me*, and hearken
to my voice, poor soul: but *depart from me ye cursed into
everlasting fire, &c.*

V. This may be the last season you will hear Christ’s voice
speaking to you; this may be the last communion, and the last
call that Christ intends to give you. This may be the last
of grace, and the last time that his Spirit will strive with you.
If you stop your ear, or harden your heart this day there will
follow an eternal dead silence, and God’s Spirit never strive
more with you, and so your day of grace is lost, and your soul
lost for ever. O young folk, what say ye to it? A season of
youth is an accepted time, and a day of salvation: for the Lord
take do not lose it. You have now plenty of sermons, sacraments,
and gospel-offers; you have Christ crucified set before
your eyes to affect your hearts, and bring you to a compliance
with his calls. You have also loud warnings this day from God’s
providence, and (I hope) some of you the inward workings of
God’s Spirit on your consciences, concurring with these outward
means. Well then, give kindly entertainment to Christ’s voice

in this season of grace; while he yet stands beseeching
 come hearken to his voice, and accept of him as your sure-
 enter into covenant with him this night, and come to his
 and seal to-morrow. O sinner, turn your back on the
 ill, leave your sins, and stop your course, and come and be
 conciled to God through this peace-maker, who is standing
 ing to be employed. Well, what answer shall I carry back
 my master, that sent me to deal with you for this end? shall
 and complain? "Lord, you was a company of obstinate
 sinners thou sentest me to; I entreated them to hearken to
 my voice, and leave their sins; but there was no concern, no
 er, no sense of sin among them. Had I been to preach to
 casts, stocks or stones, they would have been as much moved
 they. Alas! I have spent my strength in vain, my voice
 and lungs for nothing; I thought thy sweet entreaties and
 charming voice would have melted their hearts, but neither
 comforts nor terrors had any effect."
 shall I have ground to say? "Lord, I offered you sinners
 Redeemer, and entreated them to close with him. Tho'
 they stood long out against the threatenings, yet when they
 heard thy entreaties, their hearts began to relent, some be-
 gan to sigh others to weep others to long after Christ; and
 hope they are gone home to make a personal covenant with
 in this night, and sincerely design to return and seal it to-
 morrow." God grant this may be the event. *Amen.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IV.

A Sermon after the COMMUNION.

The believer's dignity in being an heir of God.

GALATIANS iv. 7.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

IN this chapter, the apostle doth hold forth the happy state of believing Gentiles under New Testament times; that is ever preferable to that of the believing *Jews* under the Old Testament. The *Jewish* church he compares to a child in minority, that is under tutors and governours, and is acquainted only with the first rudiments of religion; and likewise to the state of a servant, that is still kept under subjection and bondage: for that church was always in a servile condition, having been under the heavy yoke of a great many ceremonial rites and observations. But our blessed Lord Jesus, by his coming into the world, hath broke off that yoke from his people's neck, and hath brought them under a more spiritual and agreeable dispensation; yea, he hath sent forth his Spirit into their hearts. Upon which account the apostle concludes them to be happy, yea, even children of God, *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, &c.*

In the text we have the happy state of the believing Galatians briefly represented. 1. *Negatively, Thou art no more a servant, i. e.* no more in a state of servile subjection to the law, and the *Mosaic* rites and observances. 2dly, *Positively, Thou art a son, i. e.* Thou hast attained to a more excellent state of liberty like to that of sons, who have come to ripe age. He means not, that believers under the Old Testament have not that privilege of being children of God; no, believers then were

sons, but kept in such a state, and trained up under such harsh discipline, that they seemed more like servants than sons. But (saith he) to you believers under the New Testament the discipline is changed, and you have attained to more honourable son-like treatment. 3dly, We have an inference from this privilege of son-ship, *And if a son, then an heir of God though Christ.* Among men only the eldest son is heir, but all God's children are heirs.

In which we have two things, 1. The high dignity and pre-eminence of God's children; they are heirs of God, *i. e.* They have a free right and title to eternal life, and all the gifts and blessings of God; yea, to the infinite God himself, who is the believer's chief good and portion. 2dly, The way of obtaining this dignity and happiness, *through Christ*, and the merit of his blood: he is God's eternal Son and heir of all things, and being our surety, he, by his obedience and sufferings, hath purchased a title to believers, to be God's sons by adoption, and joint-heirs with him of the heavenly inheritance; *He is our elder brother, and is not ashamed to call us brethren.* The inheritance is his by nature, but ours by grace.

From the words thus explained observe, 1st, *That the privileges of believers under the New Testament, exceed these who lived under the Old.* The legal state was more servile, but the gospel state is more filial. 2dly, *That tho' God hath one Son only by eternal generation, viz. Lord Jesus Christ; yet he hath many sons by grace and adoption, believers.*

3dly, *That these who have the Spirit of God dwelling in their hearts and exciting them to prayer, have a good evidence of their son-ship, and filial relation to God.* This is clear from the connection of this verse with the preceeding.

4thly. The doctrine that I am to insist on at this time, is, *That it is the great honour and privilege of all true believers, to be the children and heirs of God through Jesus Christ.* This is confirmed from that parallel text, *Rom. viii. 16, 17.*

The method for handling this subject, shall be, 1. To enquire in what sense believers are the children of God. 2. In what respect they are called heirs. 3. What is the heritage they

they are entitled to. 4. How it is they attain to this privilege
 5. To shew the wonderful free grace of God, in granting such
 a glorious privilege to believers, as to be his children and heirs
 6. Make improvement of the whole.

I. As to the first, In what sense believers are the children of God. *1st, Negatively* It is not to be meant here, that they are his children only, 1. In respect of *creation*, for so all men are God's children, Mal. ii. 10. *Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?* Had believers no further interest in God than this, they should have but little comfort; for this sense God is also father to the devils and wicked men, *he made them; but he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* Nor 2. Is it to be meant, that they are his children only by *providence* for so he is to all, Deut. xxxii. 6. *Is he not thy Father that bought thee? i. e.* hath redeemed thee from slavery, and conferred great blessings on thee. Nor 3. Is it to be understood of their being his children by *profession*, or external covenant-engagement for so all the members of the visible church are, *Isa. i. 2.*

2dly, Positively, Believers are the children of God, by way of special grace, and that in these several respects. 1. In respect of *election*, God has chosen and predestinated them from all eternity to be his children and heirs, upon whom he will entail the kingdom of heaven, *Eph. i. 5. Jam. ii. 5.* 2. In respect of *regeneration*, he dignifies them with a new birth, working a gracious change upon them, infusing in them a supernatural principle of holiness, whereby they become like their heavenly Father, so they are said to be *begotten and born of God*, *Jam. i. 18. 1 John iii. 9.* 3. They are his children by *adoption*; which is an act of God's free grace, whereby he assumes those into the number of his children, who were not so naturally, but were strangers and aliens: yea, he takes these who were enemies, and of the family of hell, into the family of heaven; and graciously introduces them to all the advantages, dignities and privileges of children. As for instance, he educates, brings them up, and makes provision for them, as for sons, *Isa. xlii. 3. Matth. vii. 32. Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* 2. He allows them a share in his fatherly love and compassion, together with the protection and attendance of his angels, *Jer. xxxi. 20. Heb. i. 14.* 3. He frees them from a servile state, or any bale and drudgery-work, and endues them with

free Spirit, Rom. viii 15. — 4. They have the chastisement of sons, which is most needful, *Deut viii 5 Heb xii 6*, 8. — 5. He allows them free access to, and a filial confidence with him in prayer: hence in the verse preceeding my text, the apostle saith, *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father* — And lastly, He entitles them to the inheritance of sons, as in the text, *If sons, then heirs of God*. And this leads to

II. The second head, viz. *In what respect believers are called sons*. And for the better illustration hereof, I shall shew wherein temporal and spiritual heirs do agree, and wherein they differ.

1st. They agree, and resemble one another in these things, 1. That is an heir of an estate, hath his title *freely* conveyed to him; he pays not for it, because he has it by birth. So believers, who are spiritual heirs, have the title to their inheritance *freely*; and as they have nothing to pay for it, so it is given to them *without money, and without price*. And though they have a title to it by their *natural* birth, yet, by their *new* birth, they become the sons of God, and heirs of heaven.

2^{dly}. They who are rightful heirs of an estate, have the *surest* title of any other, because it is built upon nature: a father may turn upon his son and heir for his fault, but doth not easily disinherit him; nor will he turn him out of doors as he doth a servant for his offence. So believers, who are God's adopted children and heirs, have a most sure title to the heavenly inheritance. Though God may chastise them, yet he will not disinherit them; *Psal lxxxix 32, 33, 34. I will visit their transgressions with the rod;—nevertheless my loving kindness I will not take away utterly from him.—My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips*. Our title to the inheritance by the second covenant, is far surer than *Adam's* was by the *first*; for when he offended, God treated him as a servant and turned him out of doors. But the believer who is become a child and heir by Jesus Christ, is better secured by the second covenant; for he hath not only God's *word* God's *writ*, and God's *oath* to confirm it, but he hath the Mediator's *blood* sealing his charter, and the *earnest* of the inheritance already given him, viz. God's Spirit put into his heart, 2. *Cor. i. 22*. So that his right and title is indefeazable, and can never be altered,

3dly, An heir's title to an inheritance is reckoned more honourable than his, who obtains it another way. So believer's title is most honourable, being made heirs of God, and co-heirs with his own Son Jesus Christ, *Rom. vii. 17.* Christ alone the natural Son, and hath the primary right to the inheritance; but believers, by adoption, are assigned to a share, and made co-heirs with him. So that Christ and believers do, as it were, divide heaven betwixt them; they have the *same Father*, dwell in the *same house*, sit at the *same table*, reign on the *same throne*, partake of the *same glory*. O! what honour is this, which is put on worms of the earth? *John xvii. 22, 24. John xx. 17. Rev. iii. 21.* Christ indeed, being our elder brother, his inheritance is double, and his power and glory is far greater than the glorified saints and angels, *inasmuch as he hath, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they.* *Heb. i. 4. Eph. i. 22*

4thly, An heir, during his minority, hath not the actual possession of his inheritance, as being incapable to manage it; and therefore hath tutors and curators appointed him: So a believer, though an heir of heaven, hath not the possession of the inheritance, while here. This life is the time of his minority, and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are his tutors and curators, until he arrive at ripe age, and the years of his majority, when he will be fully meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and then he enters upon the immediate possession of all that is promised to him.

5thly, An heir of an estate, though he want the possession for a time, yet he hath a present maintenance allowed him out of it, suitable to his station and circumstances; so believers, during their minority in this world, have a sufficient maintenance granted them, out of that great inheritance promised to, and provided for them. As for *temporal things*, they have a competency secured to them while here; *Their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.* And for *spiritual things*, they shall have as much grace, strength, comfort and joy, as will bear their charges, until the time appointed come, when they shall enter upon the full possession of all.

6thly, An heir of a good estate may be somewhat straitened in his circumstances for a time, because of burdens on the estate, or some necessary restrictions laid upon him; yet he comforts himself

himself with the hopes of a plentiful estate at length. So the heirs of promise may be under many straits and difficulties while here, under burdens of corruption, fears of wrath, and hidings of God's face. They oft complain of little grace, weak faith, languishing desires, and of faint discoveries of God and Christ, and the invisible things of the other world: yet nevertheless they should not murmur, but encourage themselves in the faithful promise, and sure right they have obtained in Christ: and be thankful, if as much be allowed them out of the inheritance, as will bear their charges to heaven, where they shall be supplied to the full, forget all their straits, and remember their poverty no more.

7thly, An heir, whatever his present straits and circumstances be, is a respectful and honourable person; and they who know what he is born to, and what his expectations are, do put respect upon him: So believers, however mean and straitened they be, during their minority in this world, are very honourable persons, *the excellent ones in the earth*, and, in many respects, *are excellent than their neighbours*; they are heirs of a great inheritance, and, upon this account, should be honoured by these among whom they live; for though they make no great outward appearance at present, yet, in a little, they shall be crowned with glory and honour.

11. *Temporal and spiritual heirs* do differ in these things. 1. *Temporal heirs*, however rich they be, are only heirs of a corruptible spot of earth; but believers are heirs of an *inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them*. And what is earth to heaven?

2dly, Many heirs, here on earth, never come to the actual possession of their estates; for they may be squandered away, or lost by the ill management of their parents or tutors; or they may be taken from them by oppression or violence: and oftentimes death comes and snatches away the young heirs before they attain to ripe age; so that they never win to the possession. But heaven's heirs will all certainly get possessions of their inheritance: their tutors will not lose nor mismanage it to them; no enemy can seize it by violence; nor *thief break thro' and steal*. And death will be so far from depriving them of the possession of their inheritance, that it brings them to the immediate and full fruition thereof, thro' a glorious eternity.

3dly, A temporal heir doth not fully possess the heritage till the father dies; but the spiritual heir doth possess it fully in his father's life-time. Our eternal Father lives for ever; and this doth not hinder the heirs possessing: what a mystery here! In temporal heritages the father dies to give place to the son: but here the Son dies to bring the heirs of heaven to live and possess with the Father.

4thly, When a temporal heir comes to the possession, he can enjoy the inheritance but a short while; for death soon comes and dispossesses him. But the spiritual heir, when he gets possession of his inheritance, becomes immortal, and is for ever out of the reach of death.

III. The *third* head in the method was, to shew what the heritage is, which God's children and heirs are entitled to: surely it is the greatest and largest that ever was; *All things are yours*. 1 Cor. iii. 21.

More particularly, 1. The *earth* is their inheritance, *Mal. v. 5* though commonly they possess little of it, yet they have a covenant right to make use of the good creatures, and to outward supports and refreshments of life. The men of the world, though they have a general providential right to such things of the earth as they possess, yet they have no covenant title thereto as believers have: their enjoyments come not from God as a loving Father, or as a God in covenant with them, to promote their souls good: they have not that comfortable and sanctified enjoyment of the creature; no, that comes only to us in Christ, and is a part of the believer's portion. By the fall, *Adam* and his posterity were disinherited: they lost their covenant right over the creatures, with the sanctified use thereof: but in Christ, who is the Heir of all things, the title is renewed to believers, and they become heirs of the world: and whatever part of it falls to their share, they may look on it as a blessing of the covenant, a legacy from Christ, a part of his purchase, sanctified for their use, and designed for their good.

2dly, Heaven is their heritage, however poor they be in the world, yet they are heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him *Jam. ii. 5*. The heirs of this celestial crown are like princes in disguise, travelling in a foreign country: strangers that know them not, look only to their

ward appearance; and are apt to think them poor and miserable: but their hopes and happiness lie in things not seen; they are heirs of the land that is afar off. Sometimes, with Moses, they are allowed to come to the top of Pisgah, to view this promised land, and this is most satisfying: at other times, with Abraham, they are admitted, as it were, to walk through it, and hear God say, *All this is thine, all is made over to thee in Christ*; and this fills the heirs of heaven, with *joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

3dly, In the text, they are called *heirs of GOD*, God himself their inheritance, and this is more than to say, they are heirs of both heaven and earth. *I will be your God*, is the most comprehensive promise in the whole Bible, it imports an interest in all the blessings and promises of the new-covenant, in all the purchase and fulness of Christ, in all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and in all the divine attributes and perfections. When the Lord saith to the heirs of salvation, *I will be your God*; How great is the inheritance he bequeaths to them! It is more than if he made over to them a thousand heavens, or ten thousand worlds; for, saith he, I give you the omnipotent Jehovah, I make over myself unto you, in all my essential perfections: My *omnipotency* shall be your guard, my *omniscience* your overseer, my *omnipresence* your companion, my bounty your store, my *wisdom* your counsellor, my *justice* your rewarder, my *holiness* your fountain of grace, my *unchangeableness* the rock of your security, my *all-sufficiency* your inheritance, and my eternity the date of your happiness. Surely, O believer, the *heavens are fallen to you in pleasant places*, and you have got a *glorious heritage*.

IV. The *fourth* head was, to enquire how believers attain to this high privilege, of being children and heirs of God. 1. It is not from any worth or merit in them, but from the free love and goodness of God, that hath predestinated them to the adoption of children, and chosen them heirs of the kingdom. 2dly, It is by the meditation of Jesus Christ, who, as their surety, interposes for them, when under sentence of death; purchased the inheritance for them by his merits, and left it to them in legacy by his Testament, which he sealed and confirmed with his own blood. 3dly, By the application of the Holy Ghost, who is the executor of Christ's Testament, and who comes

comes and infects believers in the bequeathed inheritance, by renewing their souls, working faith in them, and disposing them to close with the Redeemer; planting all gracious habits in them, and thereby giving them the earnest, and first fruits of the inheritance.

V. The *fifth* thing was, to shew the wonderful grace of God, in granting such a glorious privilege to poor believers. If we seriously consider the grace of God, in adopting us to be his children and heirs, we may well cry out with the apostle *1 John iii. 1. Behold! what manner of love is this the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God?* The wonderfulness of this grace appears in these things, *1st*, That he adopts us to be his sons and heirs, when he needed us not. Men adopt sons because they are childless, and need some to propagate their families, keep up their names, and perpetuate their memories: but the eternal Father adopts children and heirs, though he hath a natural and eternal Son of his own who is *the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, a Son in whom his soul delighteth*: and although he could have been infinitely happy without us, and needed no accession to his glory. We stood in need of a father, but he stood not in need of sons.

2dly, That he chuses these to be his sons and heirs, who have nothing to recommend them to him, but are utterly unworthy of this dignity and privilege. Men usually adopt those who are of their kindred, or who are their friends and favourites; but God shews this favour to rebels, enemies, traitors, Satan's slaves, and hell's heirs. Men adopt these in whom they see, or, at least, fancy something of worth: Mordecai adopted Esther because she was fair; but God adopts these who are naturally most vile and unworthy, yea despicable as worms, loathsome as carcases, deformed as monsters, black as Ethiopians, and diseased as lepers. Having nothing to engage his love, but every thing to provoke his loathing of us.

3dly, That he should be at such charge and cost in adopting us. Men are at no pains about it, but to draw up a writ or sign or seal it, and then all is done: but infinite wisdom and power must be set on work to make us sons and heirs; an eternity must be spent in contriving the method: the eternal Son of God must die to bring it about, and the charter of our adoption

son must be sealed with his most precious blood. Never was heard, that any man let his only son suffer and die, to adopt an enemy; but this the great God hath done, which is the wonder of the redeemed, the wonder of angels, and will be the wonder of eternity.

Fourthly, That he exalts these whom he adopts to such high dignity and honour; for God to have pardoned his enemies, and delivered them from going to hell, had been much; for him to have taken his enemies, and made them his friends and favourites, had been more: but for God to take his mortal enemies into his bosom, and make them his sons and heirs, yea beautify them with his image, value them as his jewels, entitle them to his kingdom, and make them co-heirs with his beloved Son, is such a prodigy of love, as surpasseth all finite comprehension. To have advanced one of the blessed Cherubims or Seraphims so high, had been a stupendious act of grace: but to take a lump of polluted dust, a cursed sinner, a wretch as black as hell could make him, and raise him so high, yea above the brightest Cherub in glory, is an eternally astonishing wonder of free love.

Application.

I. Use of *Information*. This doctrine informs us of these things, 1. Of the wonderful love and goodness of God, to poor lost sinners in Christ: he takes enemies into his family, yea sets them among the children: and not only doth he confer the honour of sonship on them, but also puts the nature of sons in them; for they are sons by *regeneration*, as well as by *adoption*; and these are joined together, as is clear from John. i. 12, 13. *Whosoever receiveth him, he giveth power to become the sons of God, who are born not of the will of man, but of God.*

Secondly, That believers are of more noble and illustrious descent than any others: they are sons of the most high God. Some boast of their progenitors, and value themselves on their high extraction; so the Jews vaunted that they were Abraham's seed, Gen. xiii. 12. But surely it is an infinite great privilege to be among the sons of God. David thought it no small honour to be son-in-law to the king of Israel, 1 Sam. xviii. 18. And shall

any among us reckon it a small thing to be a son to the king of heaven.

3dly, That God is an infinitely rich and bountiful Father who makes all his children heirs, and that of a great and splendid inheritance: tho' his family be numerous, yet there is not one of them left unprovided; for he brings *many sons to glory* Heb. ii. 10.

II. Use of *Examination*. Let us all try what right or claim we have to this honour and privilege, of being the sons and heirs of God. 1. Try, O communicants, if ye have the marks and characters of God's children. 1st, Have you cordially made choice of God as your Father in Christ, and dedicated yourselves to him at this time, in a perpetual covenant, John iii. 19. *How shall I put thee among the children!* &c. *Thou shalt call me my father.* 2dly, Have ye received the Mediator by true and lively faith; for it is hereby we become children, John i. 12. *To as many as received him, he gave power to become sons of God* Gal. iii. 26. *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* We can be adopted only by virtue of his righteousness who is the elder brother and heir of all things. 3dly, Are ye like your Father, have you his image upon you, holiness? 4thly, Do you sincerely love Christ, your elder Brother and Redeemer John viii. 42. *Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love me.* 5thly, Do ye love and esteem all the children of the family, as the excellent of the earth? Psal. xvi. — 6thly, Are ye heartily concerned for the interest and welfare of your mother, the church? Psal. cxxxvii. 6 — 7thly, Are ye troubled for offending your Father? 2 Chron xxx. 27 — 8thly, Are you desirous of your Father's presence and company? Psal. xxvi. 8. — 9thly, Have ye childrens appetites for your spiritual food? Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 1 Pet. ii. 2.

II. Try if you have the spirit, and disposition of heirs. Is it your main care to make sure your birthright, and title to the inheritance? Many of God's children have not the advantage hereof, but they all labour after it, and are restless without it Mat. vi. 33 2dly, If you be heirs, you will highly value your birthright, and not be willing to part with it for a trifle: you will not (like prophane Esau, Heb. xii. 16) sell for sensual pleasures, and gratifications of the flesh: nay, your hearts will rise against Satan's solicitations to break with your Father

Father, and sell your birthright, and say with Naboth to Ahab, Kings xxi. 3. *The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.* God forbid, that I should part with my portion in Christ for worldly gain, carnal satisfactions, or any earthly delight whatsoever.

3dly, Your hearts and thoughts will be much set upon your heritage above, for it is your treasure, and *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* Matt. vi. 21. What do ye most think of, when ye are alone? Nebuchadnezzar, when he is alone, thinks on his large territories, Dan. iv. 29, 30. *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom?* &c. So you be heirs of heaven, your hearts will be running much thither.

4thly, In time of your difficulties and straits, you will be drawing your comfort and encouragement from the large and goodly heritage, you are entitled to; and likewise you will be looking and waiting when it will fall into your hands; yea you will be sending messengers and spies to the land of promise, to survey and bring you good tidings from thence, for your support, while in the wilderness: you will be feasting and entertaining yourselves with the thoughts of your rich inheritance, and pouring in Christ, and groaning within yourselves, "When shall I be with my Father and elder Brother above? When shall my pilgrimage be finished, and the time of my minority expire, that I may enter upon the possession?" Rom. viii. 23. *We have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies*

Lastly, All these who are heirs of heaven do get the seal and earnest of the inheritance put in their hearts, viz the Spirit of God, 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14. *After that ye believed, ye are sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.* An earnest-penny secures our right to a bargain, and is also a pledge of it; so the sanctifying Spirit, or grace of God in the heart, is a pledge and earnest of the glorious inheritance above. Communicants! have ye got this earnest in your souls? Are ye beginning to reap the first-fruits of the inheritance? Surely it will be matter of rejoicing to find it.

How shall I know if I have got the Spirit in my heart, as the seal and first-fruits of the inheritance?

A. By his actings and operations in your souls. 1: Wherever he is, he is an *illuminating Spirit*, that lets you see the evil of sin, and the excellency of Christ. 2dly, a *humbling Spirit* that brings the soul to lie in the dust, and abhor itself for its abominations. 3dly, A *Spirit of prayer*, that inclines the soul to come to its Father, for the supply of wants, Gal. iv 6. — 4thly, A *sin-subduing Spirit*, that helps to weaken and mortify indwelling corruption, Rom. viii. 13. — 5thly, A *soul sanctifying Spirit*, that infuses, increases, quickens, and actuates grace in the heart, Eph iv 23, 24. Now, wherever these gracious actings and operations of the *Spirit* are to be found, you may conclude you have got a seal of your heirship, the earnest and first fruit of the inheritance, as a pledge of your being shortly put in possession of all.

III. Use of *Exhortation*, to two sorts, 1. These who are aliens and foreigners. — 2dly, These who are children, and heirs of God.

1. I shall speak to these who are aliens, have no interest in God's family, nor the childrens privileges; and yet many of them have been presuming to eat of the childrens bread, to which they have no right. I intreat you to awake from your security and consider the misery of your state. O! that God would sound an alarm in your ears.

1. If you be not God's children, you are dogs; and yet you have been presuming to meddle with the childrens bread, which is a horrid sacrilege.

2dly, You are children of the devil, and of the family of hell; nay, you are *Satan's* bond-slaves. There is no medium; either you are God's children, or the devil's slaves, John viii. 44. What hath *Satan's* slaves to do with God's holy things?

3dly, O alien and foreigner! thou art a child of wrath, an heir of hell; this is thy native heritage and portion; and this sad heritage will remain sure to thee: when thou leavest thy substance to others, this shall go alongst with thyself to another world. *The wrath of God abideth in thee*, both here and eternally: O sinner! Wrath is thy constant covering now, and the heavens are growing blacker and blacker every day above thy head. The earth is weary of thee; the pit is opening her mouth for thee; *hell is groaning for thee from beneath*; and the thread of life,

keeping thee out of it, is just ready to break. O! waken before it be too late.

4thly, Thou art *without God in the world*; thou hast no interest in God as thy friend; thou art far from God; he is thy wrathful enemy: thy hell is begun already; for what makes hell, but exclusion from the presence of God? *Depart from me, ye cursed.* Now you are gone from God already, with his curse upon you, like the damned; only your case is not desperate as theirs is: there is some hope of your returning to God again; but there is none of theirs. *O! turn then to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.*

5thly, By presuming on the Lord's table, you have drawn a new curse on yourselves; for ye have been mocking God, shedding Christ's blood, murdering the blessed Redeemer: you have been acting Judas's part, saying, *Hail Master*, and *betraying the Son of God with a kiss*. O! Satan's slaves, you have been eating Christ's bread, but God's curse was on the morsel you got; and ye have drawn down new soul plagues on yourselves. You will be ten times more Satan's slaves than you were before; for to all your other sins, you have added this, of *crucifying Christ afresh*.

Ques. Is there any hope for such children of wrath, and heirs of hell as we are? *What shall we do to be saved?*

Ans. 1. I say to you, as *Peter to Simon Magus, Acts viii. 21*, 2. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, thy heart is not right with God: repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God for forgiveness.* Repent and weep over a slain Christ, whom you pierced at his table, and cry, *Lord deliver me from blood guiltiness*. O can you weep over a dead child, or friend? Can you weep for the loss of world's wealth, and not weep for the loss of your souls, and of your Saviour?

2dly, Retire into some secret place, and there meditate on your misery, while children of Satan, and heirs of wrath: firmly believe your sad state, your salvation is impossible, while in it. There is a bill of exclusion past in the court of heaven, against all under the covenant of works, which is your case, *Gal. iv. 30*. *The son of the bond woman shall not be heir*: heirs of wrath must not be heirs of glory: there is no salvation under this covenant, but on a condition impossible, perfect obedience to the law, and satisfaction to divine justice for the wrong already done.

done. There is no promise in it of pardon, no place for repentance, no accepting of the will for the deed. O poor forlorn soul, put the question to thyself, How shall I live in this case? How shall I die in it? How shall I appear before a just God in it? Surely, a state of wrath is too hot a climate for my soul to live in.

3dly, Cherish convictions when God sends them, go not to run away with God's arrows of conviction sticking in your consciences, to your employments, to work them out; to your cups, to drink them out; to your bed, to sleep them out; to your companions, to sport them away: No, but run with them to the great physician Christ, that he may take them out with his own hand, and apply *Gilead's balm* to the wound. Alas many destroy their immortal souls, by crucifying their convictions.

4thly, Presently embrace the sweet gospel offers that are made to you; now is the day when the great trumpet is blown, the outcast perishing sinners may come, and accept of the Gospel Jubilee Isa. xxvii. 13. Now liberty is proclaimed to the captives: now the heirs of wrath may become heirs of glory: and what way is that? Even by closing with Christ in a marriage-covenant. Come marry the heir of all things, and you shall be freed from bondage, and heaven shall be your dowry. Come flee presently out of the dominion of the law, into the dominion of grace; and there the law's curses shall not reach you. Accept of Jesus Christ on the terms of grace, and you shall have a great heritage with him, an inheritance that shall last for ever. Worldly heritages do not last; all your riches and honour, profits and pleasures must shortly be buried with you, they cannot accompany you into another world: But if you accept of Christ as your saviour and surety, then the eternal God shall be your God, and portion for ever. O heirs of wrath, what are your hearts saying? Are you content with this bargain? Are you willing to leave Satan's slavery, and become children and heirs of the great King?

5thly, Remember that dreadful vengeance will shortly fall upon them that refuse such a glorious heritage: consider what is abiding you, Psal. xi. 6. *Snares, fire, brimstone, and an horrible tempest shall be the portion of your cup.*

Exhort. 2d, To these who are sons and heirs of God.

all, speak in the first place, some things to you all in general. Has God, of his free mercy and rich grace, made you his sons and heirs, then be humble, and remember what you once were. When God found you, you were *children of wrath, even as others*. Free love hath picked you out from among the multitude of condemned malefactors, hath commanded your fetters to be taken off, put a pardon in your hands, and brought you forth to the glorious liberty of the children of God, and made you *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*. You had nothing in you to engage him to love you, yet he loved you, when you were most loathsome: What matter of wonder is here! The glorious Bridegroom courted and espoused you to himself, on the day in which you might have been led forth to execution! He took off your prison garments, and cloathed you with robes of righteousness and garments of salvation! He took the chains from off your arms, the rope from about your necks, and put his own comeliness on you, that you might be fit for the king's table! Be not proud of your gifts, graces or attainments; but remember that ye were once *children of wrath, even as others*; all you have is borrowed. Be humble also, and *remember your faults this day*: Mind, how you have forgotten your benefactor! How unkindly you have treated him that remembered you in your low estate! How unsuitably you have walked! *Is this your kindness to your friend?*

Secondly, Pity the children of wrath and heirs of hell, that still are in the chains of darkness. Be not unconcerned for them, thinking ye were once in the same condition with them; ye have got ashore, but your fellows behind you are still in danger of perishing: Put on bowels of compassion for them, pity them, and use all means for their deliverance.

Thirdly, Be content with your lot in a present world, and be patient under your present straits and difficulties, whatever they be; for you have the prospect of a great inheritance, from whence you may take encouragement under every trial. You may be easy under the world's hatred, and carry cheerfully in the midst of all affronts and injuries, for you may expect to be engaged. Favourites of princes are commonly slandered and abused. Joseph was hated of his brethren, because his father shewed more than ordinary kindness to him. *If ye were of the world, (with Christ) the world would love its own: but because ye are*
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not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you, John xv. 19. But let this solace your minds, ye are heirs of God, and dearly beloved of him.

4thly, Live as children of God, and heirs of the kingdom; walk worthy of your dignity, and behave suitably to your character. You have the angels, these great officers of the crown and chief ministers of state, appointed to wait on you, constantly, while here below, and you have a glorious expectation hereafter. Shew forth then the greatness and nobleness of your spirits, by undervaluing mean and fordid things. Let your speech and actions here look like the country to which you are going, that it may be said of you as of *Gideon's* children, Judg. vii. 18. *Each one resembled the children of a king.* The heirs of earthly kings have been observed to have had generous and noble spirits, and have scorned to intermeddle with base and inferior matters. It is a common story of *Alexander* the great, that when he was a little boy, and provoked to run a race with one of his inferiors, he first demurred, and then flatly refused the challenge, saying, *It did not become the son of a king to submit to so mean an undertaking, and contend with one so far below him.* The brave spirit of that princely youth may shame the christians who are the adopted sons of God, and heirs to a crown that shall never fade; and yet oftentimes are found groveling on the earth, like the men of this world, and busied about things very far below them. Let the heirs of heaven maintain a holy contempt of the world, and the things thereof. Let them set their feet on these things on which worldlings set their hearts; and reckon themselves richer and happier in their relation to God and the kingdom above, than any graceless monarch that ever wore an earthly crown. Shall earthly men make such a noise in the world, and think none comparable to them, because forsooth their heap of dung is some bigger than their neighbours? (for so *Paul* esteems the world) and will the children of the King of heaven of whom the world is not worthy Heb. xi. 29. be so low and mean spirited, as to be amused and dazzled with the world's vanities; who yet have God for their portion, Christ for their husband, heaven for their home, and glory for their treasure?

5thly, Let the heirs of heaven be mutually concerned in one another; let them sympathize together, when any of them is

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trouble, and also rejoice in another's welfare. And when the time cometh that they arrive at full age, and are taken up to the possession of their inheritance, (though they be your near relations) do not quarrel God's providence, or mourn *as these that have no hope*; or carry, as if you grudged their happiness: but cheerfully submit to your Father's will, and rejoice in their preferment; for the *day of their death is better than the day of their birth*.

6thly, Be earnest in prayer, that God may raise up many young heirs to supply the room of those that he is taking home. Let the heirs of God be never so much increased, God's children will not envy their number, but greatly rejoice therein; seeing the inheritance is vast and infinitely satisfying to both men and angels; and our heavenly Father is highly glorified in the multitude of his children. And *lastly*, When heirs are brought into the family, carry affectionately to them; be kind to young heirs, especially, during the time of their nonage and want of experience; be for *eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*, and great shall your reward be in heaven.

In the next place, I shall say something more particularly to those who were at their Father's table yesterday, of whom I presume there have been, and are several sorts.

I. There may be some (I hope) that have ground to say, that they came to their Father's table, and he smiled on them, and dealt bountifully with them. To such I shall say these few things, 1st, Wonder at the Lord's kindness, and bleis his name with your whole souls, for his distinguishing favours to you, who were by nature enemies to God, and children of Satan. 2dly, Hold fast and improve carefully what you have got, and let not Satan rob you of it.— 3dly, Sympathize with other children of the family, that have not won your length, but perhaps are under great discouragements; mind their case, and speak a good word for them now, while you are favourites of heaven.

II. In the next place, I shall speak to those heirs of heaven, who, notwithstanding of their being at the table, remain full of doubts and fears, and are very apprehensive that God has not put them among the children, nor given them a right to the Father's portion. Well, what is the ground of your doubting? O, saith one, I scarce feel the working of the sanctifying Spirit

rit of God in my soul, which is the common earnest or pledge of the inheritance, that God useth to give to his heirs while here. *Answer*, Though grace be weak in you, you must not despise the day of small things, or say you have none at all: nay, bless God if thou canst spy any spark of grace in thy heart at all, and pray that God may cherish it. A man that gets an earnest of a good bargain, is not much discouraged whether it be a greater or smaller piece of money, a sixpence or half a crown, for he thinks the least piece is a sufficient earnest or pledge from an honest man of his bargain; and he is easy seeing he knows he has to do with one that is faithful, and will not go back of his word: indeed he might be discouraged, if the which he got were not an earnest penny: but there is a great difference betwixt a piece of money that is given in gratitude and that which is given only in earnest, as a pledge of a far greater sum. or of a very rich bargain. O heir of heaven, remember this, the small degree of grace thou hast, is given on as an earnest of more grace, yea of eternal glory itself.

2dly, *Another* may be saying, Ah! but I want that love to God, that a child should have to his father. *Ans.* 1. It is good thou art sensible of it, and that thou knowest thy wants. 2dly, Canst thou say, it is thy greatest grief, thou hast not more love to thy Father; yea, that thou wouldst give a world, if thou wast master of it, for more heart-love to him? Then take comfort for there is sincerity of love to God in thy heart.

3dly, *Another* may say, I have not the spirit of prayer, which God useth to bestow on his children; I cannot attain to the enlargements and fluent expressions that I see others have in prayer. *Ans.* 1. It may be they are old experienced christians thou conversest with, and they likewise have their ebbs and flowings as well as others; for the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. Thou seest perhaps the one, but art unacquainted with the other. 2dly, It is thy happiness, thou hast to do with prayer with one that looks not so much to the words of the mouth, as the affections of the heart. If thou hast a heart string on God, and flowing out toward him in duty, God looks that better than the most eloquent expressions,

4thly, Ah! saith some poor soul I cannot attain to any fervors of heart and frame in prayer. *Ans.* 1. Is it thy greatest grief and trouble that it is so? Then it is a good sign, that

thou hast some tenderness in thy heart. 2dly, Dost thou look to thy elder brother *Jesus Christ*, that he may plead for thee, and send his Spirit to help thy infirmities? Our blessed Lord *Jesus* has prayed for many that could not pray for themselves. Cry to him for the quickening influences of his Spirit, to enable you to call on his name; for *he gives his Spirit to them that ask him.*

5thly, It may be some poor drooping soul is saying, I came to my Father's table yesterday, but instead of any comfortable discovery, all I got was a frown; my Father frowned, and seemed angry with me. *Ans. 1.* Thou hast reason to be thankful, that he took any notice of thee at all; for sometimes God holds communion with his people by frowns and reproofs, and thereby humbles them for sin, and draws them nearer to himself. 2dly, Perhaps God is correcting thee for some former sins against light, which as yet thou hast not mourned over: for these whom God takes into his family, and puts among his children, he will correct in his fatherly love, but *his loving kindness will not take away from them.* Let all the children of God and heirs of heaven submit in a humble and kindly manner, to the reproofs and corrections of their heavenly Father. And let them say, as *Elihu* to *Job*, under his sharp trials, *What I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.* Lord, train me up during my minority, as thou pleasest; make use of what discipline towards me, thou thinkest best for me; only (if it be thy blessed will) make it known to me for my comfort, that I do really belong to thy family, and shall not be shut out of doors for ever. And so my soul shall live and praise thy name.

AMEN."

S E R M O N V.

Being a Sermon after the COMMUNION.

The fainting Believer strengthened for his work.

ISAIAH xl. 29.

He giveth power to the faint : and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.

THE Prophet having concluded the preceeding chapter with a prophecy of the captivity of the *Jews* into *Babylon*, though it was many years before it came ; he, in this and the succeeding chapters, furnishes the church and people of God with a great many precious promises for their support and comfort, during that long captivity ; which surely would be of great use to them in that cloudy and dark day.

In the latter end of this chapter, the prophet is reproving the people of God, who are now supposed to be the captives at *Babylon*, for their unbelief and dependency under their affliction in laying or thinking God had either cast them off, or could not help them, *v.* 27. For remedying whereof, he puts them in mind of God's power and all-sufficiency to help in the greatest straits, *v.* 28. And in the text and following verses, he assures them of God's compassion, and readiness to help them under all their sinking discouragements. *He giveth power to the faint, &c.*

More particularly in the text, we may notice these things
 1. The sad case of many of God's people in captivity, *They were faint and without might, i. e.* They were under pressure and burdens both outward and inward, that were ready to crush them, and make them faint away ; they were called to severa pieces both of service and suffering, for which they had no strength nor might of themselves. — 2dly, We have their

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mercy and privilege under this sad case, viz. power and strength, i. e. Spiritual strength mainly, which is graciously promised them for their encouragement, under all their faintings and trials — 3dly, The author of this privilege, viz. *The everlasting God, the Lord Jehovah, with whom is everlasting strength, who fainteth not, neither is weary* — 4thly, The way how this mercy is conveyed, it is in a way of free gift, without any worth or merit on our part; *he giveth it, and he increaseth it*; he giveth strength where it is not, and he increaseth it where it is already given in any measure.

Doctrine, *That as the Lord's people while here, are liable to many fainting discouragements, under which they cannot support themselves; so the Lord is pleased to give them suitable strength for all their exigences.* This is also confirmed from that gracious promise, recorded in the following chapter, Isa lxi. 10. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* And the Psalmist confirms this truth, by his own comfortable experience, Psal. xxxviii. 3. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

The method I chuse for prosecuting this doctrine, shall be, 1st, To enquire into these fainting discouragements, which believers labour under while here, 2dly, Why the Lord doth let them meet with such trials. 3dly, How it is that the Lord doth strengthen his weak and fainting people. 4thly, What are the great ends and uses for which the Lord gives such strength to his people. 5thly, Give some reasons to prove, that the Lord will certainly give them this strength. 6thly, Make improvement.

1. As to the first, viz. To instance some of these fainting discouragements that believers labour under while here, and which, in a special manner, do call for divine support. And these are of two sorts, viz. Either of a temporal or spiritual nature.

1st, Sometimes they meet with external afflicting providences, which are very discouraging: As 1. When they are trysted with poverty and want, so that they know not how to subsist themselves and their families; this is a great trial, and requires spiritual strength from God to help them to carry right under it,

— 2dly,

— 2dly, When they are destitute of *earthly friends*, and have none to comfort or sympathize with them in trouble; this is also a heavy trial, that needs strength from God.— 3dly, When they are loaded with *reproaches* and misrepresentations, and that not only from enemies, but even from friends; this hath been very sinking to the best of God's people.— 4thly, When they are trysted with the death and *loss* of near and dear *relations*, pleasant children, and helpful friends; this case hath been afflicting to many.— 5thly, When they are under bodily sickness or rack-
ing pains, so that they *have no rest in their bones* wearisome nights are appointed for them, and they are full of *tossings* till the dawning of the day.— 6thly, When they have a near view of meeting with death, that king of terrors, and terror of kings.— 7thly, When they are under the oppression and persecution of cruel enemies. These are trials that the dearest of God's children are exposed to, and under which they would be ready to faint if they were not strengthened from above. And especially these outward pressures are very sinking, and discouraging to them; especially when they think it is their sin that has brought them into these sad circumstances, or when the trials are of a long continuance, and it may be something to them appears to be singular, as it was in the case of the Jews in Babylon. Then it is that God's people are ready to faint and succumb; and should look to God to step in with suitable supplies of strength.

2dly, Sometimes God's people are trysted with fainting discouragements of a spiritual nature: As 1. When they find dwelling corruption, and heart plagues strong and prevailing this case was very affecting and afflicting to David, Ps lxxv and to Paul, Rom. vii. 24. And to the church when they cry out, Isa lxiv 6. *Our iniquities like the wind have taken us away*. 2. The tide is so strong we have no might to stem it.— 2dly, When the enemy is exalted over them, and Satan doth harass them with blasphemous injections, horrid atheistical thoughts and violent tentations; he sometimes tempts God's children to the greatest of sins, as he tempted Job to curse God: how the soul ready to faint at such a time, if it get not strength from God! And cryeth out, *How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? It is like a sword in my bones when the enemy reproacheth me, and saith daily to me, Where is thy God.* O my re-

Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy.

3dly, When God hides his face, and they cannot get access to him in duty: so as they think, they are given up and left to struggle with Satan and corruption in their own strength. That is a melancholly case to the soul, under which it would faint, without secret support from God.

4thly, When they find their hearts wholly out of frame for any spiritual duty; by reason of much backwardness to it, wearying of it, and corruption working in them, which carries them away from God in time of duty: such as atheism, unbelief, worldly-mindedness, heart-hardness, &c. Now the soul would faint, and wholly backslide from God, if he did not secretly uphold it.

5thly, When the soul is brought back again, as it were, to the foot of mount Sinai, and made to hear the thunderings thereof, and the curses of a broken law renewed: the law gets a new commission to take the man into custody, and put his feet into the stocks: so that old wounds are opened, and former guilt is revived, and God seems to behave to him like a stranger or an enemy. Thus he did to Heman, Psal, lxxxviii. Now at such a time the soul is ready to faint, and say, *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But especially if sickness, or the messenger of death come and knock at the man's door, while in such a case, O! how is he distressed with the melancholly apprehensions of death and judgment? "Death (thinks he) is near, and I am most unready for it; judgment is approaching, my compts are unclear, and the Judge's face all covered with frowns." Now the soul indeed would faint, if God in Christ did not support it.

6thly, As believers have many fainting discouragements, upon the account of their own case, so also upon a public account, in respect of the church and land wherein they live: As 1. When they see a spirit of slumber and deep sleep fallen upon the professors; so that they are not moved with the judgments of God, when denounced both by his word and providence; yea though *the fire be kindled, and burning round about them, yet they lay it not to heart.* 2dly, When they see religion under a great and visible decay among all ranks, many turning daily more careless

careless and indifferent about duty, more slack about family-worship and secret prayer, and daily more carnal and worldly in their conversation. When they see christian-love decay, divisions and animosities increase, malice, envy, and hatred of one another prevail, and people growing more selfish; minding their own things, and careless about the things of Jesus Christ.

3dly, When they see God's Spirit in a sad measure withdrawn from the assemblies of his people; ordinances become as a sealed book, dry breasts, and a miscarrying womb, so that *Ichabod* may be written on them, or *God is departed*; when they see communions lifeless, and not what they want to be. Christ is absent, and yet few sensible of the judgment, or laying it to heart, so as to lament after the Lord. They see many busy to sin him away, but few endeavouring to pray him back again. The sincere seekers of God are often like to faint under this discouragement. — 4thly, When they see many professors making foolish slips, yea falling into scandalous sins, to the reproach of religion, and hardening of the wicked; and but few like to be found sincere in their profession. — 5thly, When they see these that are truly godly, tender and conscientious in their walk, public spirited and concerned for the interest of Christ, removing and going off the stage: This is a very melancholly and sinking discouragement to the few that are left behind, under which they need support from God: Hence it was that the Psalmist cries earnestly, Psal. xii. 1. *Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

II. The second thing proposed was, to enquire why the Lord lets his people be trysted with such fainting discouragements.

1st, To correct them for their former faults and miscarriages: hence we read, Jer. iv. 18. when the Lord had threatened several sad things against his people, he saith, *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee.* God will have his people to smart for sin; not to make any satisfaction for sin, but to render sin bitter unto them.

2dly, To humble and keep them low, in midst of their great attainments and signal enjoyments: believers are still apt to be puffed up with these, if they were not kept under by humbling dispensations. Hence even Paul himself had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, 2 Cor. xii. 8.

3dly, To let them know the difference betwixt earth and heaven, a militant and triumphant state. When things go well with us in the world, we are apt to say with *Peter* on the mount, *It is good for us to be here.* But when things go ill, God's people turn their tongue, and say with the Psalmist, *Psal. lxxiii. 27. It is good for me to draw nigh to God.* When we live at ease, we are ready to think ourselves at home; but when trouble comes, we begin to say, *Arise, let us depart this is not our rest.* It is not easy to wean us from the comforts of this life: and therefore God many times doth rub gall and wormwood on the breasts of this present world, to imbitter its comforts, and take our hearts off it.

4thly, To awaken the spirit of prayer, and make them more importunate in their addresses to the throne of grace, *Psal. cxxx. 1.* Christ suffered the storm to continue, till the ship was almost overwhelmed, that the disciples might come and awaken him with their cries to help them, *Matt. viii. 25*

5thly, That his people may get new proofs of his love and tender care in strengthening such weak reeds as they are, to endure such storms: and in his stepping in so seasonably for their relief and support, when ready to faint and succumb. God's people have much to speak on this account, to the praise of his free grace, *Psal. xciv. 18. When I said, my foot slippeth: thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.*

6thly, To cause his people long for heaven, and mend their pace, in the way to it, *Phil i. 23.* There is a great difference betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness; our repentings in prosperity and adversity. *Isai xxvi. 16. Hosea v. 15.* He, that in prosperity prayed with a cold heart and dry eyes, can in affliction cry aloud, and mingle his prayers with tears. Though heaven was much out of sight and out of mind before, and he had scarce a thought of flitting; yet now when distress comes, he begins to sigh with *David. Psal. lv. 6. O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I flee away and be at rest: I would hasten my escape from the windy tempest.*

III. The next thing is to enquire, how it is that the Lord doth strengthen his weak and fainting people. And here I shall say two things, 1st, Enquire into the nature of this spiritual strength, the Lord doth give his people. ——— 2dly, Into the way and manner how he conveys it to them.

As to the first, this *spiritual strength*, supposeth, that the soul is made alive, and raised out of the grave of sin and a natural state, by the quickening Spirit of God. And that the soul is united to Christ by faith, who is the fountain and channel of all grace and spiritual strength.

But more directly, God's strengthening his people imports these things, 1st, The Lord's creating and implanting the habits of grace in the soul, which are the strength of the soul: and therefore called the armour of God, and our shield and helmet Ephes. vi.

2^{dly}, His increasing of grace in the soul; for he not only plants these habits, but strengthens them, and gradually perfects what he has begun. Psal xcii. 12, 13.

3^{dly}, His breathing on his own work of grace in the soul, and thereby actuating his peoples graces, and drawing them forth into a lively exercise: for God must not only plant grace and increase it, but also set it a work, and bring it into action. Phil ii, 13. *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.*

4^{thly}, The Lord's strengthening of his fainting people imports his letting out, and conveying of fresh supplies of grace to his people, in the time of their need. Not only doth he plant and increase, and actuate grace, but likewise he doth come in with seasonable supplies and reinforcements to the weak and decayed graces of his people, answerable to their pressures and exigencies. Grace of itself is but a creature, and subject to perils, and would soon be destroyed by the frequent attacks made upon it, if it were not seasonably reinforced with new supplies from its author. And thus the Lord, from time to time, feeds the believers lamp with fresh oil; gives in more faith, more love, more hope, and more desires; and thus he gives power to the faint, and strengthens these things which remain when ready to die.

5^{thly}, It imports the supplying the soul with experiences of the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God, for the nourishing and strengthening of faith in the time of trial: and therefore to find the Lord when he is strengthening his fainting people in the text and context, he refers them to their former experience, 27. 28. *Hast thou not heard? Hast thou not known? How sayest thou, that God hath forsaken thee? Often do we find David strengthening his faith this way, Psal, xlii. Psal cxvi.*

6thly, It lies, in the Lord's applying to the soul his gracious and comfortable promises, and thereby animating his people with spiritual courage, and resolution to grapple with all their enemies and difficulties. He shews that God is on their side, that *his grace is sufficient for them* and that *he will never leave them, nor forsake them*, Isa. xli. 10 Psal. cxviii. 6, Hebr. xiii. 4, 6. 2 Cor xii 9

7thly, The Lord strengthens his people, by giving them an encouraging view and prospect of a happy outgate from all their trials and discouragements, and of a glorious victory over all their enemies. Job. xix 25, Rom. xvi. 20. 2 Tim. iv 7, 8.

II. I come to the second thing, viz. To shew the way and manner how this spiritual strength is conveyed to believers, And this you may take up in these following propositions.

1st, God has treasured up in Jesus Christ his Son, a fulness of grace and spiritual strength for his people. As our Mediator is the *purchaser* of this strength, so he is the *trustee*, to whom it is given in order to be bestowed upon believers: this is clear, 1st, from the promises of God for giving strength they run in this channel. Z ch. x. 12. *I will strengthen them in the Lord, &c in Christ*) and they shall walk up and down in his name *saith the Lord*.— 2d'y, From the precepts of God, which are in the same strain, Eph. vi 10. *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, 2 Tim. ii. 1. *My son be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ*.— 3d'y, From the practice of the saints, they all look for their strength this way, Isa xlv. 24. *Surely shall we say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*. And Paul with. Phil iv. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*. So that Christ is our head of influences and store-keeper. The stock of our grace and strength, since Adam's fall and mismanagement, is all put in Christ's hand; he is the great steward of heaven, the key of the store house is in his custody, and on him we must daily depend for necessary supplies.

2dly, The way that Christ our head and treasurer communicates this strength, and gives out the necessary supplies thereof to his people, is by the ministration of the *holy Spirit* and his gracious operations and influences on their souls John xv 26. John xvi. 14, 15 And for this effect the Spirit of God dwells in believers, to excite and draw forth their graces to frequent

acts and a lively exercise ; and to give them these gracious aids and assistances, their exigences do call for.

3dly, The way that the holy Spirit gives this strength to believers is, in the use of appointed means, both public and private Psal. lxxxiv. 4. 5 6, 7. Where we see, that these who would go from strength to strength, must dwell in God's house, and attend his ordinances. We expect not our daily food without labouring, tilling, sowing and reaping ; so neither can we look for spiritual strength but in the use of the word, sacraments and prayer.

IV The fourth thing in the general method, is, To shew what are the great ends and uses, for which the Lord gives this spiritual strength to his people.

1st, He gives it to them for *doing*, or performing of duty ; for without new supplies of strength, we cannot act spiritually, nor persevere in duty : hence the Spouse cries out, *Cant. i. 4. Draw me and we will run after thee*. And the Psalmist saith, Psal. cxix. 32. *I will run the ways of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart*. God's work must ever be done in God's strength.

2dly, He gives it for *suffering*, and bearing of crosses and afflictions, and we need God's strength that we may do it without murmuring or fainting, Col. i. 11.

3dly For *fighting*, we have strong and dangerous enemies to conflict with, *the devil, the world, and indwelling sin* ; and we have no strength of our own to resist or subdue them ; wherefore, we must look to God for supernatural strength.

V. The next thing was, to give reasons, why the Lord will certainly give suitable strength to his people under all their exigences

1st, Because it was purchased for them by their surety Christ and promised to them in him, *Zech. x. 12.*

2dly, Because they were in the most solemn and serious manner recommended to the care of God by his beloved Son Jesus Christ, when he was leaving the world, *John xvii. 11.*

3dly, Because of their near relation to him, and his great love to them ; they are the subjects of his kingdom, the children of his family, yea they are, as it were, the wife of his bosom ; and will he not then take special care of them ?

4thly

4thly, Because they rely and depend wholly upon the Lord himself for this strength and support, *Isaiah xxvi. 3. Psalms lvii. 2.*

5thly, Because the Lord knows that his people have many strong and dangerous enemies; and that they have no inherent strength to hold out against them, having lost that by the fall. Yea, he knows, that they have a natural bentness to backsliding, that the seed of the worst sin is in them, and of themselves they cannot stand before the least spark of temptation; and so would be infallibly undone, if he did not strengthen them, *Hos. xi. 7. Psal. xix, 13.*

Application.

Use I *Of Information.* We may hence see, 1. That worldly prosperity and carnal joy are no sign of God's favour: for God's people are subject to many fainting discouragements here. Wicked men receive their good things in this life, but a believer's good things are to come.

2dly, We may hence be informed of the difference betwixt the two Covenants, *of Works* and *of Grace.* Adam, by the *first*, was to do all by his own inherent strength; but believers, under the *second*, do all by borrowed strength, and must constantly be beholden to God for new supplies. And it is well for us that it is so, for our stock is far surer in God's hand, than in our own. When the *prodigal* got his stock in his own hand, he presently left his father's house, *went into a far country*, and squandered all away, and so would we if God should trust us with it. Besides, by this gracious method believers are kept humble all their days, and put to keep up a constant correspondence with a throne of grace, and give all the glory of their through-bearing to God's free grace. *Blessed be God for the well ordered covenant.*

3dly, We may hence see, how great security believers have for their through-bearing; almighty power is engaged for them; they are strengthened and *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* So that everlasting strength must fail before a believer can finally miscarry.

Use

Use II. Of *Reproof*. 1. To those who are too secure and confident, when they attain to any spiritual comfort or joy, and do not remember the fainting discouragements God's people are subject to, while in this world. O *communicants*, have you been kindly entertained at this feast? Be not vain or secure, all things here are changeable; how suddenly was *David's* case altered? *Psal. xxx.* one time he is mounted up in prosperity; but being too confident, he is presently cast down and troubled. And in *Psal. cxix* we find him at one time *rejoicing in God's testimonies, as much as in all riches*; and very soon after, his *soul is cleaving to the dust, and melting for heaviness*. Go not then to build too much on sensible consolations, for these come and go at God's pleasure; it is in heaven only, you can have continual day without night or cloudings; but here you are to look for changes, yea for fainting discouragements, therefore prepare for them, by securing a title to divine strength.

2dly, To these believers who give too much way to fainting discouragements, and do not encourage themselves in their covenant God, and his strength. I do not marvel, O *communicants*, tho' ye be cast down, who are sensible of the hidings of God's face, the prevailing of heart plagues, the buffetings of Satan, &c. but only give not way to excessive discouragement, call it excessive, when it is ready to make you give over hopes, lay aside endeavours, indispose you for holy duties, refuse to apply to Christ your all-sufficient help, or refuse comfort from God's promises of strength and support. Some indeed think religion lies in desperate unbelieving thoughts, and in making of complaints; but surely there is no religion there, otherwise we must conclude *Cain, Jadas, and the damned* to be godly. Religion rather lies in the actings of faith, and improving God's promises for strengthening us in doing his will.

3dly, To *Arminians*, who maintain the doctrine of free-will viz. that it is in the power of a man's free will, to do that which is spiritually and savingly good, if he please to use his natural abilities. Oh! how little do these men know themselves that talk so? for if it be not in the power of a man's will when graciously changed and renewed, to do good, without superadded supplies of grace and strength from God, from time to time, as certainly it is not; far less can a natural and unregenerate person do it, that is dead in trespasses and sins.

4thly, To these communicants who look not intirely to God in Christ for strength for the work and warfare, duties and difficulties before them; but lean too much to something in themselves, or something they have got at this occasion. 1. Some trust too much to the stability of their *own resolutions* and engagements: they have vowed and sworn, and they hope likewise to perform accordingly. But do not depend upon these, otherwise they will soon fail you; as they did *Peter* after the first communion. The *Psalmist* was under many resolutions to keep close to the way of duty, yet he says, Psal. lxxiii 2. *My feet were almost gone, and my steps had well nigh slipped.* And he acknowledges, it was nothing but God's mercy that held him up, Psal. xciv. 18.

2dly, Others trust too much to the stability of their *gracious habits*, without looking to God for daily renewed influences of strength, for actuating and recruiting their weak graces. But, what is grace, faith, love, fear of God, repentance, hope? Of themselves they are but vanishing things, and if they were not seasonably strengthened and supplied from heaven, they would soon die, Rev. iii. 2.

5thly, We may here reprove these who make it an excuse for the neglect of duty, *they want strength.* Oh! it is, because they want will. For can you say, that, though you have no strength, of yourselves; yet you desire to cast your impotent souls in God's way, and aim at duty as you can, looking to God for strength, and plead his promise? Could you say this, it were something. Were you like a man rowing up the water, and still beat back by the impetuous stream, you might have some shadow of excuse; but when you do not make sincere attempts, you can have none.

Quest. How shall we undertake or perform duty, when we are dead, and find the influences of grace and strength withdrawn?

Ans. 1. Whatever be our case or frame for duty, yet still God's command is of binding force on us, and obliges us to do it.... 2dly, No pretence of indisposition can warrand our not obeying a divine command; for our deadness and indisposition is our sin, and one sin can never excuse another, *two blacks cannot make one white.* So that in a dead hour, you must essay to do

do your duty, though you can do nothing but the very outward form. 3dly, You must aim at your duty to prevent greater evils, for if you neglect it wholly, your case grows still worse: Your deadness increases, your hardness, impenitency, darkness, weakness and indisposition will still grow greater.---- 4thly, By aiming at duty, you put yourselves in God's road: and when, like the blind man, you ly in Christ's way, you stand fairer for a visit or an alms from him, than these who stay at a distance.---- 5thly, Duties performed when we are indisposed, may be very pleasing to God. It must surely be acceptable to our gracious Lord and Master, to see one of his weak or lamed servants attempt to go his errands, though he halt and make but slow progress in his way: nay, this will move his tender heart to pity him, and give him strength. And many a time have his servants got supplies of strength on a sudden, when they have been essaying duty. Their souls, *ere they were aware, have made them like the chariots of Amminadab*, Cant. vi. 12. Therefore, O discouraged communicant, persist in aiming at thy duty, whatever be thy present frame. Who knows, when thou art lifting at thy heavy burden, but God will graciously lend thee a lift, and lift it for thee?

Use III. Of *Trial*. O communicants, examine, if you have got any spiritual strength at this solemn feast. Many a weak believer has found it a strengthening meal to their fainting souls. *Mark*, If it be so with you, 1. Do ye find your graces more quick and vigorous than formerly? As for instance, 1. Is *faith* more lively? Are you better pleased with the contrivance of grace, and method of salvation than before? And are you now enabled to abandon your own righteousness, and go out to your surety Christ; laying the burden of your sins upon him, and leaning wholly to him for pardon and acceptance with God, and also looking to him as your head of influences for heart purity and sanctifying grace, and strength to perform duty? 2dly, Is your *repentance* and grief for sin increased? Do you see more of sin's deformity, and abhor it as the enemy of Christ? And are you more afraid of piercing your Redeemer by it, and more resolved against wicked company and temptations to sin than before?----- 3dly, Is your love and desires toward Christ more quickened? Are you more restless without his presence?

Wou

Would you part with your best enjoyments, in a world, for a sight of his face? Are you more desirous of heart-holiness, that you may be capable to serve Christ, and advance the interest of his kingdom?

2dly, If this ordinance hath been a strengthening meal to you, then you will find more delight in duty than before, you will be inclined and enabled to pray more fervently, to hear more attentively, to praise more affectionately, receive more believingly, keep the Sabbath more exactly, watch over your heart and ways more diligently; and, in a word, to be more humble and pious towards God, more just and righteous towards man, and more sober and temperate towards yourselves: yea, you will be more afraid to shift or neglect any known duty than you were before,

3dly, You will be more animated and encouraged to *fight the good fight of faith*, to resist the devils temptations, and the worlds allurements, to struggle against your lusts, and mortify indwelling sin. And you will be setting conscience on the watch-tower, to give warning of the enemies approach; and you will not be slow to take the alarm.

4thly, If you have got more strength, you will be better reconciled to the cross than formerly; and content with patience and submission to underly what troubles and afflictions the Lord thinks fit to try you with for your soul's good; yea, and kiss the rod when it comes, saynig, *Good is the will of the Lord concerning me.*

Use IV. of *Exhortation*. Let me hence exhort you to several duties. 1. Let these believers, who are not trysted with such fainting discouragements as others, bless God for his tenderness towards them, and bear their smaller trials the more patiently. How gentle is your exercise, and soul trouble, in respect of Job's, David's, Heman's, and many others, dear and near to God, who have been ready to faint under their burdens, and pressed above measure; God is gracious to you, he sees you are weak, and will not overburden you.

2dly, Let none misconstrue believers exercises of spirit, nor for the greatest spirits in the world have been thus exercised. despise them, because they are frequently faint and discouraged: David was a man of singular valour, that had a heart as *the*

heart of a lion, 2 Sam. xvii. 10. a man of eminent wisdom, and therefore said to be *wise as an angel of God*. 2 Sam. xiv. 20. a man of a cheerful temper, and a great master of music, and therefore called the *sweet singer of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. And yet we frequently find him sore troubled, bowed down, cleaving to the dust, and sharply exercised under the hidings of God's face, and other soul distresses

3dly, Doth God give suitable strength to his people in all exigences? Let none abuse this doctrine, by giving up with the use of the means that God hath appointed; and neglecting to use their own endeavours. For though believers have Christ to lean to all their way in their journey to heaven; yet none must expect to be carried thither upon his shoulders, without setting down a foot. We may warrantably look to him for strength for every duty; yet it is in our using the means that this strength is conveyed.

4thly, Beware of leaning to yourselves, and neglecting to look for this promised strength. 1. Lean not to your own purposes; for your *goodness is like the morning dew*. 2. Lean not to your gracious *habits*; for these are but creatures, and ready to die. 3. Lean not to your *duties* and performances; for they are defiled and unclean. 4. Lean not to your *frames*; for they are fleeting and unconstant. And besides, it is highly dangerous and provoking to God, for to trust in any of these; remember the fearful curse that is pronounced against him *that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*. Jer xvii. 5, 6. Whom then shall we trust? Read *Isai. xxvi. 4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength*.

5thly, Let all believing communicants bless God for this new and excellent method of salvation through *Jesus Christ*. The new covenant is far better than the old. Now our stock is not in our own hand, but in Christ's, and he manages it for us; which is our great happiness. As when God brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand, he did not let them down on the other side of the red-sea, and then bid them shift their way to Canaan. No, he led them on their way; yea, *As a man carries his children, so he bare them all the way they went*. So when God, in a day of his power, brings an elect soul out of

spiritual

spiritual Egypt, he doth not set him in the way with a stock of strength in his hand, and then leave him to march through the wilderness alone: No, he leads and supports him all the way; for he knows that the whole country rises on him in his march, and if left to go alone, without special and renewed aid, he would never get to Canaan.

Quest. But what course shall I take to get these seasonable supplies of strength from God, that I may be helped safe thro' the wilderness, without fainting and upfitting.

Ans. Take these *directions*. 1. Labour to be thoroughly convinced of your own impotence and insufficiency, that you may be weak in your own sense and feeling; for the way to be strong, is to be weak, according to the apostles experience, 2 Cor. xii. 10. *When I am weak, then am I strong.* Hence also it is said of these worthies, Heb. xi. 34 *Out of weakness they were made strong,* i. e. out of weakness felt and apprehended.

2dly, Humbly represent and bemoan your impotence before God, like Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18. *I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, I was as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke.* He felt his own impotence and aversion to what was good; and then he groans and looks up to God for power; *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God.* And, in the next verse, we see how readily the Lord stepped in with pity and help to him. Thus also did Jehoshaphat, and found help, 2 Chron. xx. 12. *We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. &c.* Tho' we be weak, yet we know thou art infinitely powerful, and full of compassion.

3dly, Use well any small power you have, and it will increase. The right arm is more strong and vigorous than the left, because it is more exercised: so grace, the more it is exercised, the more it grows, Mat. xiii. 12. Prov. x. 29.

4thly, Wait on the Lord in the diligent use of the means; for it is promised, Isai. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength.* And in Psal. xxvii. 14. *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.* We must use, but not trust to the means, but to God in the due use of them.

5thly, Walk tenderly, and guard against every known sin;

for sin lets out the soul's strength, as bleeding lets the spirit out of the body.

6thly, Be often looking, in a believing way, to the Mediator Christ, your treasurer and head of influences; and derive all your supplies of strength from and thro' him also.

7thly, Carefully entertain the Spirit's motions; and fall in with them. *Grieve not the Spirit* of Christ, which is sent to strengthen you; otherwise you will cast away your strength from you.

Lastly, Acquaint yourselves, O communicants, with the word of God, and its gracious promises of strength; lay them up in store against the time of need, and plead them humbly with God: for a prayer grounded on a promise is likely to prevail. This was David's argument under his faintings, Psal. cxix. 28. *Strengthen thou me, according to thy word.* And he had the experience of its prevailing with God, Psal. cxxxviii. 3 *In the day when I cried; thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* I shall add no more, but conclude with the apostle's words, 1 Pet. v. 10, 11. *The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever. Amen.*

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